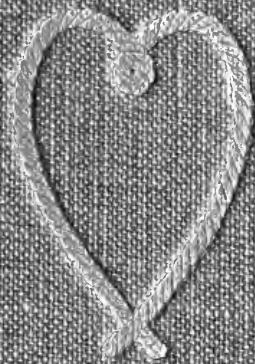


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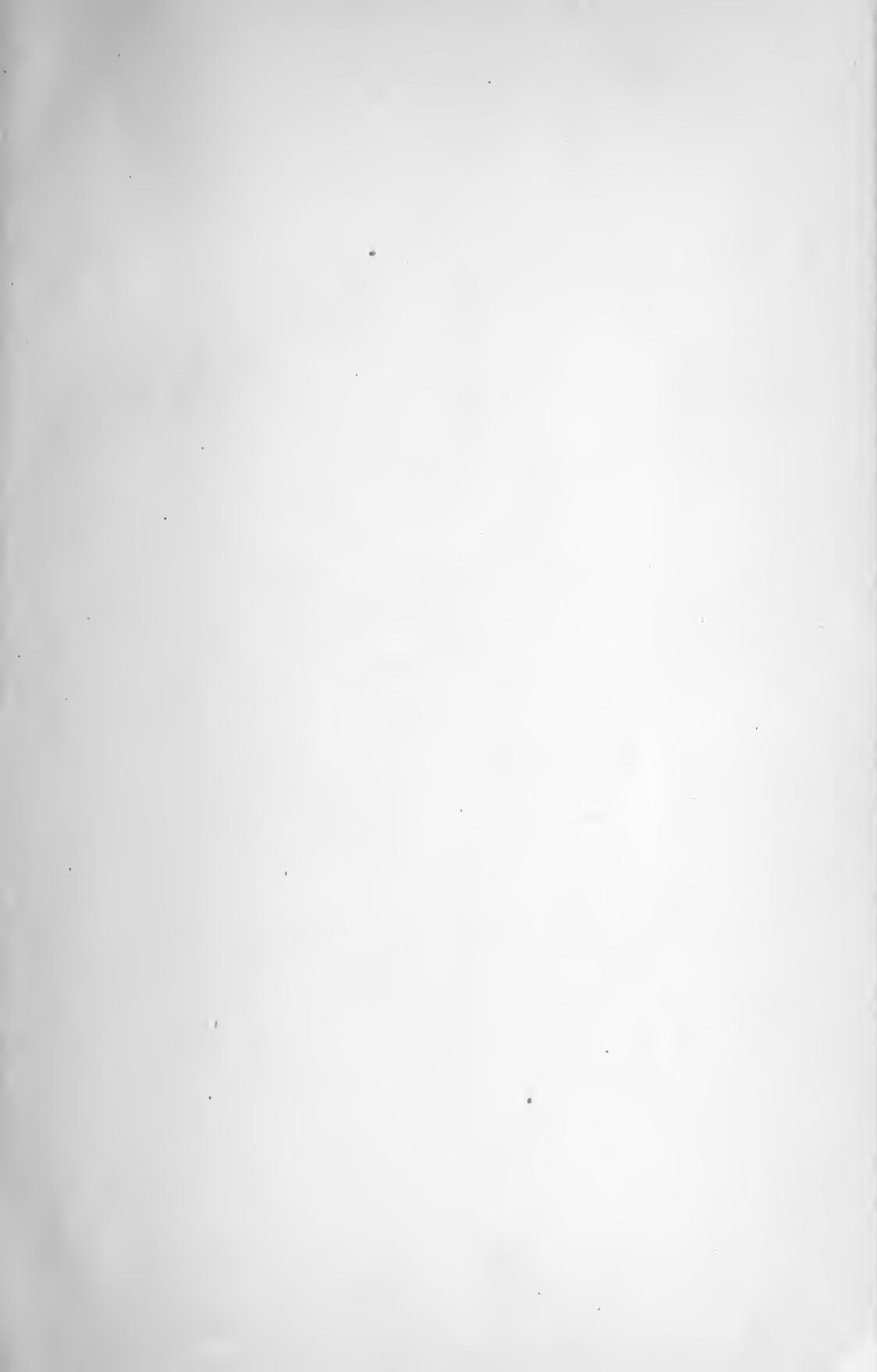


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Memory Sketches

To S. H.

*Whose hands are folded long in trust,
Where crosses blossom out of dust.*

Memory Sketches

by
P. J. Carroll, C. S. C.

Author of

"Round About Home," "Songs of Creelabeg," Etc.



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FOREWORD

THESE bits of life, picked up from the morning, are brief, simple memories. They are recorded now, in the hope that the men and women of the race may catch from them the joy of recognition. For it has come to me they will see in my Father John, a Father John of their own; in the Deel gliding past Athery and Creel-abeg, a Deel making music elsewhere; in the hedge, the garden, the bogfield of my small world, a hedge, a garden, a bogfield in the world where their young lives were lived.

I cannot tell you all the quiet comfort that has come to me following the unrecorded paths of our dear priest. That he is worthy a more ambitious chronicle, I well know; and that his unforgettable goodness did not appear to one of more temperament and seeing will always seem to me a loss.

These bits, however, are given out of the unwritten, larger life of the man in the trust that they may edify and please. There is no attempt at analysis, no trying to present spiritual seeing and inwardness. Just what a country lad saw and heard as from afar.

God rest Father John! He had the mind of a poet and the heart of a soggarth.



I

THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH

TWAS a March morning when Father McCarthy said his good-by to Creelabeg. The bare oak limbs out in the chapel yard wailed dismally when caught by the wind-gusts that blew down from Ballyadan hills. Gray Ballyadan, hiding the vision of the flat farms to the west! The rain came in intermittent showers and beat on the large chapel windows like the crack of musketry. It was cold weather indeed. The cows stood close to the stone ditches, their backs thrust up against the wind; the sheep were huddled together in corners surveying with meek eyes the deserted fields; crows with motionless wings skidded down the wind, and cawed defiantly. It was just the time for a funeral or a leave-taking. A gray day is for gray thoughts.

Well, Father McCarthy was going at last. He had been in Creelabeg for six years, and we all began to think he would die there. Then, of a sudden, like a summer squall, we heard he was going, as all the others had gone, to a bigger and better parish. We were lonesome to be sure; but there had been so many changes in Creelabeg we were almost sorrow-proof, like professional mourners at a wake.

Father McCarthy was well over fifty when he received his promotion. He was a short, stout man who moved about with leisurely dignity, never mingling much with the people as his neighbor, Father Tracy of Knockfeen, used to do. He came at the Stations, when there was a sick call or a funeral, or of an odd time to bless

a house to which misfortunes came thick and fast; or maybe if there were visitations from someone departed. When he walked along the road on week days he never stood by the stone ditch to have a word at the headland with the plowman turning down the stubbles. He saluted you when you lifted your hat; if he knew you well, he might inquire after the condition of someone sick at home; but beyond that he did not encourage conversation.

Father McCarthy preached on Sundays at the two low Masses; and while not what Jim Donnelly would call a "powerful preacher," yet he said very refreshing and practical things. He seldom scolded; but he could send home an unpleasant truth with art and finality when there was occasion. Once when there was an unpleasantness between a few of the "boys" back at Grageen "cross," he said from the altar the next Sunday, "In praying for the uncivilized pagans of foreign parts let us not forget to recommend the Christians who acted like pagans back at Grageen during the week."

Well, and so he was to say his farewell that March morning of wind and cold and pelting wet. How quiet the chapel was in the pauses of the wind! The low tones of the priest himself as he pronounced the prayers of the Mass, and the occasional cough of the kneeling worshipers only emphasized the stillness between the wind-gusts and the rapping of the rain. Then, after the Gospel, he turned to his people to say his good-by. Such sweet, mellow words he said, the memory of them still keeps at Creelabeg! The men fingered their hats; the women wept softly as they always do in Ireland when the priest is going away.

"Faith," observed Mrs. Noonan, as she walked home after the last Mass, "Father McCarthy had a great heart

an' a feelin' for the poor, for all that he was distant in his way."

"Ay so; 'deed he had, 'deed he had. An' whin you would be sick he was kind and considerate."

Mrs. Buckley—Jammie's wife at the east side of Danahar road—made herself more snug under her gray shawl after this brief eulogy.

"He's goin' to a big place anyway," called Johnny Mangan, as he passed by the women, his head bent low against the gale.

"So they say, Johnny; so they say," observed Mrs. Noonan from behind her umbrella which she held direct toward the rain. "An' will he have a curate?"

"Yerra, will he? An' will he have two—why don't you ask?"

"But how could I ask, when I didn't think?" retorted Mrs. Noonan.

"Of course you didn't think! Sure that's the trouble with everybody from Ballydehob to Drumagoo—they don't think. An' why don't they think? Because they don't, that's why."

"Faith, Johnny," said Mrs. Buckley, "you walk like a counsellor or a mimber."

"Ay," agreed Johnny, his heart lifted.

"But you talk like a gommel," resumed Mrs. Buckley, completing her thought.

Back at the chapel the people have all gone. The "clerk" has put away the vestments, covered the altar and locked the chapel door. In a little he leaves for his house and haggard at the back of Logan's bog a short distance to the north.

Father McCarthy has finished his thanksgiving, has put away his soutane and stands at the sacristy door.

He hears the melancholy music of the leafless oaks swinging back and forth in the gale. He looks across the level country, where a few months before contented herds grazed leisurely, following each vein of sweet grass. Every field is now as barren of life and vegetation as a desert. The onward sweep of the army of clouds, the swinging trees, the rain, lashing roof and windows—all serve to quicken the pensive mood.

"The weather," he mused, "is gray and fitful, with the sun never far in hiding. 'Tis the race—sombre, not sullen, tried by afflictions yet always watching for the sun in the heavens. The divine melancholy, the poet's heart-longing—they have it, if any people have it."

Then he went back into the sacristy, surveyed the moist walls, the old vestment case, the fireplace with its empty grate and the lately painted wardrobe in which two albs and two surplices were hung from wire hooks.

"Not a great church, not a great parish—as we measure by time," he continued to reflect as he passed out from the sacristy to the tiled sanctuary. "But measured by eternity these quiet people I'm leaving, whose days pass in the calm of the valley or on the hill where the sun and wind come—measured by eternity they are as rich as the gold chests of Solomon."

On his way home he stopped in to see Alice Magee who had the "decline" for now two years and would never walk on her feet again.

"Poor Alice," they all said, "and she with voice in her as sweet as a thrush! And she with features that lovely she might be a daughter o' the princess o' the North."

"And how are you today, Alice?" asked the priest seeing the white face through the gloom of the day.

"I'm not suffering at all, Father, thank you," looking up wistfully at the priest. "But when the day does be dark and the wind wailing at the window I get lonesome for the sun and for a sight of the river Deel."

"The sigh of the race, the sigh of the race!" mused the priest. Then to the girl:

"Have no fear, child, have no fear. God is in the dark and in the light, in the storm and in the calm."

"Ay, so you often tell me, Father. But sometimes I do be afraid. Especially today, and you going out of Creelabeg for always."

"I'll not forget you, child, when I'm gone," answered the priest strangely touched.

"And when I'm gone, I won't forget you, Father," she answered gently. She waited for a little and continued. "Back at Laharona there's a place for me. Narrow it is and very small, but 'tis all I'll want. Jackey Drew, who was back at Mary Hogan's funeral a week ago ere yesterday, says the ground is soft and the ivy ditch keeps the wind away."

The girl had a spell of coughing, and her mother, a little woman with a patient face, moistened the lips of the sufferer.

"Ay," answered the priest, "and up in Heaven your limbs will grow strong, and your breath will come easy and your heart will beat as angel harps. So don't trouble at all about the going, child—mine or yours. You're going a long way to be sure, but 'tis safe home at the end of the journey."

"And, Father, 'tis very still at Laharona, for the ivy ditch keeps the wind away."

"Ay so," answered the priest, "but Laharona is only the stopping place on the way to Heaven. 'Tis dark

outside today, and there's blue mist blowing in from the sea, and the wind runs down the hollow places. But don't mind, child. In Heaven there's light always shining from His face and calm over all His eternity."

From its place on the wall above the mantelpiece, the circular clock called off the hour of two, while a sudden wind gust made the close-fitting windows vibrate.

"Good-by, Alice, child," said Father McCarthy as he prepared to go. "Think of me up beyond when you're near Him."

"Indeed I will, Father; but I'm thinking I'll have to wait for a bit in Purgatory, for I've a way of being cross at times."

"Pray to her, child."

"Our Lady?"

"Ay. She'll put the blue mantle about you and take you home out of the dark. God bless you!"

Once on the street, Father McCarthy was the same solemn, unbending man. He nodded to Tomeen Madigan hurrying down the side-path to his home at the opposite side of the river Deel.

"Father McCarthy is like the sky," commented the same Tomeen to Mick Dannahar, the mill-man, when they met on the bridge.

"An' why?" asked Mick.

"An' why! Because why, he's cloudy—only the blue is behind the clouds."

"I suppose it do be, Tomeen, but it don't often show," commented Mick with reflection.

"No it don't, but 'tis there anyhow, so 'tis aequal."

Well, Father McCarthy left us next day for the other side of the diocese. 'Twasn't a hundred miles off, to be sure, but 'twas out of the lives of the people of Creela-

beg. He went to the little station in the black side-car we all knew so well. There was a goodly number of well-wishers down there to bid him a respectful good-by.

To the north some miles out from Foynes we hear the screech of the engine as it comes. There is commotion, and loud conversation between the station-master and the porter. The little train pulls in and stops while the engine pants like a living thing. Just at the carriage door, the priest turns around, lifts his tall hat and so bids good-by to those who have come to see him away. The men lift their hats, and the boys their caps; the women wave handkerchiefs and weep softly. The priest enters the carriage; the porter closes the door. The usual whistle of the guard to the engine-driver follows, and the train moves away.

"Wisha God speed him where he's going!" ejaculates Mary Hogan.

"He's a good man," modestly observes Jammie Lacey.

"He is; by gor he is," agrees Tomeen Madigan. "He is a cloudy man, as we say, but the blue is always behind the clouds."

II

HE COMES TO US

WELL, of all the days in the year, 'twas St. Patrick's day that Father Condon first said Mass in our chapel after Father McCarthy went away. And what a St. Patrick's morning it was too! A calm, frosty air so that the breath of a man would be gray in front of him, the sun over everything, the Deel booming back at the dam, and the chapel bell ringing over all the parish. Now, Father Condon, who was always called "Father John" to distinguish him from his brother, "Father James," was a curate in the city before he came to us, and was known all over the county as a Land Leaguer. And what a man he was! Tall and eager with great eyes that looked at you as if with a light.

He preached a sermon that first St. Patrick's day some lines of which still live over the years. "My dear brethren," he said, "this Ireland of St. Patrick is not only a certain number of square miles of earth surrounded by the sea. It is a love, a hope, a memory. Today, those beyond us in other continents, who have never seen this land of ours, but have heard of it from their fathers, are quickened with an affection as great as our own. Every hill white with the sun-blaze at noontime, every flat field where the herds wander in search of sweet grass, every lake reflecting sun and cloud, every river restless for the ocean is dear to the sons and daughters of our exiled brothers and sisters.

"It is for us, my brethren, to keep alive through every change the love of country founded on Faith. With us

religion and country have been held together by suffering. When our country was torn and bleeding, our Faith gave us comfort. Then let us, when our country is out of her bondage and can walk in clear places where there is light, not forget our Faith that sustained us in hours of distress."

On the way home from Mass there was great talk about the sermon. Jammie Hoban observed:

"By gor, the new priest spakes well at any rate."

"Yeh, does he? You may say he does!" exclaimed Mike Ahern with some feeling.

"He's a tall man, isn't he? An' hasn't he a voice as clear as the chapel bell of a frosty mornin'?" Jammie added.

Well, the days came and went and every hour made a new friend for the priest. 'Twas "Father John" here and "Father John" there from one end of the parish to the other. He was a member of the hurling team in Blackrock in his day and gave the boys some hints about the game the Sunday before they played Killmedy for the West county championship; he wrote short plays for the school-children which the nuns trained them to reproduce; he had a dancing-master from Ardee to teach Irish dancing, and trained a chorus of boys and girls in the first and second stages of "sixth"; he was honorary president of the Land League and often had to make speeches at meetings. If a tenant couldn't settle for the rent, 'twas Father John who went to the landlord to secure a few months of grace; if there was a disagreement between a couple of neighbors about the boundary line between two pieces of land, 'twas the priest who came and argued them into settlement out of court. He was a born leader, and always led along the ways of peace.

"I'm a physical force man, Father John," protested a Limerick attorney while out from the city visiting the priest one afternoon.

"And I'm anything—anything right—that will give Ireland her own."

"Then why not arms? Why not an uprising? You priests are the leaders of the people. Why don't you use that power you have over them—us, I should say—swing us into line, start a rebellion and get Ireland what alone will satisfy her—absolute emancipation from England?"

"It has been tried—that has been tried," mused the priest.

"I tell you, Father John," persisted the attorney, "there never was a cause worth winning that hasn't been lost a hundred times before it was won at last. Dogged insistence, the insistence of the half-fanatic will win every time. What was '79? What was Emmet's attempt? What was '98? Not uprisings;—half-formed, ill-timed beginnings; expressions of the race's aspirations that wanted men of method and calm judgment to realize them. Father John, we're the greatest people that ever fought, and we'd have had Ireland for our own long ago if we had a calculating, painstaking, systematizing Yankee to lead us."

"And yet which has secured us the most, the war of arms or the war of minds? Emmet or O'Connell? Grattan or Wolfe Tone? You speak of 'dogged insistence.' Precisely. It is because of 'dogged insistence,' the securing this concession today and that other tomorrow, that we have received a measure of self-government now. Our fights with arms have been failures, because, somehow, as you say, we've always lacked system and generalship. In the battle of minds we have had O'Connell

—resourceful, towering, insistent. He had a million men at Tara. What a revolution he might have quickened into blaze with the spark of his spoken word! But he knew himself, and better, he knew Ireland. He was no soldier, and Ireland was prostrate. So he did what he was best fitted to do, and for what we must ever hold his memory in large honor—he secured what he could from a parliament that gave grudgingly. When he did not receive all he asked for, he took what was given. His successes are not so spectacular as they are permanent. Yes, all said, O'Connell did more for Ireland than did any one man since St. Patrick. He is the man who began the policy of self-government by instalment. He loved Ireland, not as an idealist, but as a practical politician."

"However, what we want, Father John, is an Ireland of idealists, not an Ireland of politicians. When Ireland becomes a nest of office-seekers fighting for the coziest place, then the Ireland of poets and mystics will pass away."

"'In my Father's house there are many mansions,'" quoted the priest. "Ireland today needs the man of vision and wise administering, just as well as the saint and the maker of songs."

When the sun was midway to the west, the priest accompanied the young attorney to the train. On his return he met Kate Purcell, the apple-woman, driving her mouse-colored donkey from the market of Ardee.

"How are the apples going, Kate?" he asked.

"O faith, they'ren't goin' at all, your Reverence. 'Tis growing they are now, though very slow, for the spring is early yet."

"Quite so. But I was thinking of the market."

"Oh, the market. Well, there isn't much market to

speak of. You see, your Reverence, the old apples are nearly all gone and the new ones that do be comin' won't be come till the autumn."

"And you like to sell apples?" asked the priest as he walked beside the slow-moving donkey.

"I do, and I don't, your Reverence, dependin' on which way you take it. I like the apples, an' it sours the heart in me to sell thim. Whin I pick thim of a mornin', they're wet with the dew an' rosy with young life, an' the smell o' thim is very sweet. An' whin I put thim away in the sacks each one seems to say to me, 'Good-by, Kate; you'll take me with you to Ardee whin you're goin', but you'll come back without me.' An' all along the road the smell o' thim is about me an' I can't put the thought o' thim away. Thin whin a man comes into the market an' takes up my rosy apples an' feels the weight an' the softness, an' says to me, 'How much?' my heart quickens an' the blood runs up to my face. An' so I say to him, maybe:

"Is it to buy thim you want?"

"Ay so; an' I get thim chape."

"'Tis chape you want thim, is it? Faith I thought so the minit I saw you comin'."

"Well, I'm in a hurry. How much?"

"They're a good apple," I says to him seein' the way he handles a rosy one and bares the skin with his thumbnail.

"They're not any too good," he tells me maybe, takin' up another fine fellow and holdin' him close to his nostrils.

"Wisha," I say to him, "the devil mind you"—God and your Reverence pardon me!—"an' 'tis a long time before you an' the likes o' you will be half as good."

“‘Stop your prate,’ he says, ‘an’ give me a price on your apples.’

“‘I won’t give you a price, nor half a price, nor quarter a price.’

“‘An’ why won’t you?’ he says.

“‘An’ why won’t I? Haven’t you just spoken bad about my apples an’ do you suppose ‘tis to the likes o’ you I’d sell them after that?’

“‘You’re a strange woman,’ says he, lookin’ at me out o’ his wonderin’ eyes.”

“But Kate,” observed the priest with some curiosity, “I don’t see how you sell your apples if you treat all your customers that way.”

“But I don’t, your Reverence. ‘Tis only with them as have no consideration for my dear apples that I refuse to have dalin’s. When one comes an’ handles them tenderly an’ looks on them with a kind eye, I part with them willingly, keepin’ a glad heart; for I say to myself they are goin’ to a friend. But whin one comes as has no feelin’ excep’ at the inds o’ his fingers, it runs agin my grain like I was sellin’ a church to a Protestant, or as if a child o’ mine was settin’ sail for Australia.”

“Kate,” half mused the priest, “you have the sentiment of the race for the land and what the land gives.”

“I don’t know at all about that, Father; but I like my apples that are as rosy as the sun when ‘tis back near Boganora hills of an evenin’.”

At the crossing of the roads the ways of the priest and the apple-woman divided.

“Well, Kate,” quoted Father John, “‘I tak’ the high road and you tak’ the low.’”

“Wisha God speed and keep your Reverence what-

ever road you go, though I hope it will always be up high where the sun an' the light is!"

"And you too!" wished the priest.

"O sure 'tis aqual about me. I'm a cratur as hasn't a soul dependin' on me. But sure we're all dependin' on you. So keep your health, an' don't expose yourself. For it takes only a draf' to get a cowld upon a person, but it takes half the medicine o' Moylans' apothecary to get it off again."

Father John walked the rest of the way to his home alone. "We talk about a new dawn and a new day," he mused; "but in the light of that new day shall we have the sweetness and the patience and the cheerfulness and the dear faith that has set our race apart along the trying years? How will the new wine set in the old casks?"

When he entered the house, the housekeeper announced:

"The man was here from Dublin about the altar wine."

"Ay," he answered still musing, "but it may not set well in the old casks."

III

THE MEECHERS

MIKE'S MIKEEN took care of Father John's garden and did odd jobs about the place. He was not the parish clerk, you understand, who rang the chapel bell and answered Mass of week days. Mike's Mikeen was different. One might call him a personal attendant, an attache, a *persona privata*, or the like.

You see, Father John had a garden back of his house, where he grew vegetables, fruits and flowers. Little walks of slate stone made graceful curves around the flowerbeds and fruit trees. It was a place to dream of a summer morning, when the sun shone warm on the nodding roses, and the subtle scents of flower and fruit came to your nostrils pleasantly. There was the priest himself down at the end of the garden wearing his soutanne which the nuns at Ardee made for him. A short distance behind him stood the whitethorn hedge, and beyond the hedge the fields ran level till they reached the base of the Ballyadan hills.

Mike's Mikeen was "earthing" the potato drills with the spade, and Father John stood watching him. What a glorious man he was—so tall, so erect, so strong! When he spoke, how mellow and measured his words; and when he looked how truth shone out of his eyes! Yet he was not a man who read your soul, as it were; not a man who took a certain delight in being able to penetrate beyond the seeming. His gaze was frank, not

shrewd; his manner quiet, not lordly or pompous as if he were a general reviewing a regiment of troops.

"Mikeen," he was saying as he watched the workman, "how long did you go to school?"

"'Bout,—'bout, I should say," Mikeen answered, straightening himself and closing one eye while he looked at the sun, "five year; or just whin I was ready to pass into first stage of fifth."

"That's only four years, allowing a year to each class."

"Ah no, Father; you see there's 'Red,' an' 'Green,' an' 'Second,' an' 'Third,' an' 'Fourth.' "

"Red and Green?" asked the priest in perplexity.

"Ay. 'Red,' that's infant class and 'Green,' that's the first class."

"Quite so, I remember."

His National School days came back to the man of Maynooth training and temperament.

"And if you had more schooling what would you be doing today?"

"What would I be doin'?"

"Ay."

"I'd be earthin' drills with the spade."

"Mightn't you be riding a black horse like Dr. Moylen, or mightn't you be a clever attorney at Limerick, like Myles Hartigan?" suggested the priest.

Mikeen changed the spade and leaned on the handle with his left shoulder, while the steel blade sank into the soft earth. He shook his head slowly.

"No, Father John. My brain was always powerful slow. I never could do six figures o' sums without making seven mistakes, an' I couldn't read a page o' readin' without havin' to stop to spell 'bout half the words."

“ ‘*Deus resistit superbis et humilibus dat gratiam’*,” quoted the priest with reflection.

“True for you, Father,” observed Mikeen.

The priest laughed low and with unction as he turned and walked toward the whitethorn hedge at the end of the garden, and Mikeen resumed his toil. The blossoms sweetened the air of the morning and lifted the heart of the priest like the odor of incense.

“The day is young,” he said to himself; “the flat fields are green and the sky is the painter’s sky when he would have us dream of summer. I’ll climb the hills this day and see visions.”

He went back through the garden to the house, changed his soutanne for his clerical coat and soon was journeying across the fields to the Ballyadan hills. The short grass was springy below his feet, and the yellow-hearted daisies shone starlike everywhere. Hiding meadow-larks rose with a start at his coming, and brown insects buzzed about the long spears of grass making the day drowsy. The fragrant air was sweet to the sense, and the vigorous walking quickened the blood down along his veins. Midway in his journey over the flat fields, a stream hurried, bearing its tribute to the river Deel.

Jim Madigan’s two boys, Martin and Jack, sat on the bank of the stream fishing for minnows, using pins for hooks. When they saw the priest coming, they stood up, took off their caps, sticking the ends of the improvised fishing rods into the soft earth of the bank. Martin was red-headed and freckled. Jack was dark-haired and white-faced. The boots of both boys were as brown as the clay on the top of Paddy Donahue’s sand-pit; their hands were rough, their clothes loose and unkept.

"No school today, boys?" questioned Father John surveying the two.

Jack looked down and began to kick the green sod with the heel of his boot. Martin bit the finger nails of his right hand, and thrust his left into a torn trousers' pocket. The priest waited a little.

"No school?" he asked again.

"Yes, Father," Jack answered very low and sheepishly.

"Then why are you here?"

"We're meechin'," they both answered in a unison of abysmal humility.

"Ah, ha, so you're playing truant!" Father John would insist on using the standard word.

"Yes, Father," they replied not knowing what fate was awaiting them.

The priest looked at the truants. They appeared so forlorn, so crushed, he pitied. The rough hands, the unkept clothes, the boots unpolished and badly laced served to check his rising indignation. Perhaps it was just as well. One is not so sure that Spartan severity is a more effective remedy for wrong-doing than is forbearance.

"Don't you know 'tis very shameful of you to spend your time out here when your parents think you're at school? You are young now, just at the age when you should be getting some schooling to help you on afterwards. What a shame it is to waste your time when you know 'twill never come back to you again! O boys, boys, how you'll live to regret this when you're old! Some day, as you work out in the garden in the rain and cold, you'll look back to this day and to other days like it and you'll say, 'If we only had sense and went to school we needn't

be out here now in the chill and in the damp trying to make a livelihood.' Boys, don't you know, 'tisn't the teachers, nor your parents, nor me you are harming, but yourselves? Now, you are like soldiers making ready for battle—the battle of life. What a shame it will be for you, and how crushed you'll feel at the thought, that you wasted your time and never made ready for the battle when you were young! God help you, and you so foolish as to throw away your chances to get a schooling!"

The two "meechers" cried softly and rubbed the hot tears away with the backs of their hands. To tell the truth their spirits were crushed under the mild reproof into which there entered pity and regret. The priest's heart went out to the offenders.

"Come, walk with me," he said.

They went beside him like two sheep-dogs that had been chasing the sheep and were called to reckoning by their master.

"You are sorry?" asked the priest with his eyes on the hill range.

"Oh, yes, Father, I am," Martin answered, his eyes on the ground.

"An' Father, I'll never do it again," added Jack in sincere repentance.

"We'll say no more about it. So long as you promise never to let this happen again, we'll let bygones be bygones. Now, come with me to the top of the hill."

Even as the priest, a boy trotting at either side to keep up with his pace, caught the breeze pungent with the odor of the heather, he forgot the "meechers'" sin of omission. How could he think of schoolboy sins that day and he at the base of the Ballyadan hills! There were

the high skies of Ireland above him, and around him the bushes white with blossoms; there were mountain sheep searching in blissful leisure for sweet bits of green, their shorn backs white above the heath; robin, and linnet and thrush flashed forks of song across the air in a storm of melody.

It was a long climb. At the top of the range, the priest paused and looked back over the way they had come. Far down, where the land was level, blossoming clover-fields lay still in the lap of the windless day, and wide ridges of potatoes were covered with stalks that stood matted together over the black soil. Growing mangold and turnip gardens, meadow-fields whitening to ripeness, acres of grain heavy with yield—all were spread before the city-bred priest as a wonder-world, the splendor of which he had never seen before. And glimmering through the bushes that grew on its banks, or smooth and shining as silver in the open spaces, the stream where the boys had been fishing, went songless to the river. Then the pulse that never ceases to beat came to him like remote thunder, the Deel leaping over the mill-dam on its way to the Shannon.

“It shall bud forth and blossom and shall rejoice with with joy and praise; the glory of Libanus is given to it; the beauty of Carmel and Saron; they shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God!” quoted Father John.

A magpie, with his white-and-black plumage and long tapering tail, rose from an old ruin to the west and flew toward them.

“Bad luck entirely!” exclaimed Jack Madigan in a low voice that carried mystery.

“Why bad luck?” asked the priest.

"Ah, you know, Father," explained Jack, proud of his knowledge, "one magpie manes bad luck and two manes good."

"Quite so, I remember," said the priest who had forgotten the poetic imaginings of his peasant countrymen after years of wrestling with the *nego* and the *concedo* and the *distinguo* of dialecticians.

"But how do you know that one magpie means bad luck?"

"Well, Father," Jack ventured, forgetting his truancy, "some say it does be true an' others again say 'tis only *morhaya*. Now to show that sometimes it does be true, there's Jim Dore who met one magpie when he was goin' to save hay back at Ballyadan. He fell asleep upon a cock o' timothy when 'twas very warm that same day, an' whin his mouth was open a lizard jumped into his mouth an' down his troat, an' he would ha' died only a nearby woman ran out o' her house with a bit o' fried bacon, an' put it up to his mouth an' whin the lizard smelt the bacon he jumped out again."

"Yeh but," said Martin, "didn't Padeen Dannahar see two magpies the mornin' he was goin' to the forge an' didn't his horse run away anyhow an' lep over the ditch into Cronan's haggard?"

"Ay so," asserted the priest, and added, "*Se non è vero è ben trovato.*"

They walked along the hill-range to the ruins out of which the magpie had come. It was a still place, full of shadows.

"Maybe a hermit lived and labored and prayed here," mused the priest while the boys wandered among the bushes in search of berries. "Maybe he dreamed his dreams and saw his visions, and maybe, too, he set them

down in songs as sweet as the lyrics of Columba; but they're gone, if they ever were, like most of the sweet things of Ireland, and not an echo remains."

He looked down the other side of the hill. Far off where the land was level white houses shone like stars above emerald fields.

"'Tis a fair land—too fair to be in bondage," he thought as he surveyed the quiet country in the lengthening shadows. "Maybe God wishes it; ay, no doubt He wishes it—for His own wise designs."

It was an hour later than usual when Martin and Jack reached home that evening.

"Where were ye?" demanded their father sternly.

"Meechin," Jack answered without a tremor in his voice.

"Yerra, my God, what do I hear?" exclaimed his sire.

"Yeh, Jack," said Mrs. Madigan, who happened in, "is it takin' lave o' your sinses you are to talk that way?"

"But 'tis true," the boy insisted.

"Get me the switch!" cried his father in a voice that always carried terror.

"But sure Father John knows. We tould him, an' he forgave us whin we promised not to do it any more."

"Father John!" said the father in amazement.

"Ay. We met him down at the stream whin we were fishin'. We tould him the truth whin he asked us, an' he tould us to be good boys an' not do the like any more. We promised and wint with him to the top of Ballyadan, where we spint the day. That's why we're late."

"Do ye mane our own priest, our Father John?" again asked the man of the house in wonder.

"Ay!"

"Don't mind the switch, Jimmie," he advised a younger son who had set out to secure the instrument of punishment. "But all the same, if ye grow up like tinkers somebody else will be to blame."

"Don't spake that way about the priest, Jim," advised Mrs. Madigan.

"Who's spaking about the priest, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, well, if you arn't, 'tis aequal," said his wife.

" 'Tis; of course 'tis." Then with finality, "All the same, if thim boys grows up like tinkers 'tis I won't be to blame—'tis I won't be to blame."

IV.

JIM REGAN'S FIRST COMMUNION.

DR. MANGAN drove from Creelabeg in his side-car to see Jim Regan who had the typhoid fever. Jim was a large, ungainly, wondering-eyed boy who never came by his senses when they were due him. He lived with his people down at Coonamara, a bog-land valley where the mists hung heavy in the early morning before the sun lifted his head above Progue's Point. "Gray Coonamara," is what everybody called the long stretch of rush-covered bog that slept silent under the fostering of two hills. Out of this bog men lifted the black peat for the hand-turf; and, as they worked, you would think they were spirits, so shadowy they looked through the gray mist of the day.

Well, Jim Regan was a big, soft lad whose mind wandered like an empty boat adrift. He could work down in the bog, to be sure, lifting the dark earth with his shovel; he could run to the spring and fetch a gallon of water to his mother; he could walk over to Craig's Hill in mid-May for the sheep and drive them back to the river for the washing. But for all that, Jim was a wondering-eyed, half-witted creature who never thought alone or consecutively.

He went to school when he was young, but you might as well try to make a sieve hold water, as Jim Regan's head hold ideas. Many an hour that good man, Mr. James Sullivan, gave to the defective lad trying to teach him the mysteries of the alphabet. You could hear the monotonous repetition, "A—A, B—B, C—C," above the

hum of the voices till your head grew dizzy.

"Now, Jim," asked the teacher, "what letter is this?" Mr. Sullivan placed the pencil-point on the letter "E." The large eyes looked long and fixedly at the letter, the tongue unloosed and Jim answered, "B." Mr. Sullivan shook his head sadly and Jim guessed again. It was no use; Jim Regan could not master the alphabet by any method known to the pedagogy of those days. There are other and newer methods now, but are children better and more quickly informed than before fads and faddists? One wonders.

Father John himself worked Saturday after Saturday in the early part of the day trying to get the elements of the catechism safely moored in Jim's head. Sometimes it would seem as if a truth were anchored, when, lo, it was swept out to the open sea again!

"We'll let the lad alone for awhile," said the priest to Mrs. Regan one day. "We only worry and frighten him. In His time and way, God will make clear and easy what now seems so dark and difficult. We'll let the boy be for a time till we learn God's holy will in his regard."

Well, Jim left school in his tenth year not a bit wiser than he was the day he began.

"Goodby to you, Jim. I think 'tis best you go for the time being at least."

The teacher shook hands with his pupil.

"Ay, sir," Jim agreed, looking at the teacher with wide-open eyes.

"Work in the open. You may learn more from the fields than you do from books."

"Ay, sir."

And Jim went away.

Then one day, years later, after he had wrestled with wind and rain season after season, Jim was brought to earth by typhoid. That was what hurried Dr. Mangan down the road from Creelabeg.

"He's not well, ma'am; not well at all, and he should have the priest."

"Yeh, but Doctor," whispered the mother, "sure the boy has never 'received' at all because he was never right in his mind."

"Quite so, ma'am; quite so. And yet, ma'am, a visit from Father John would be a service; indeed a great service."

"Ay, so, an' thank you, Doctor! An' at your biddin', I'll send for the priest this day."

Shortly afterward the eldest boy of the Regans went up the shortcut for Father John.

In the afternoon the priest walked down over the fields to Coonamara. It was a silent, sunless day; a day of moods when memories tread on memories. As the priest paced along, grazing sheep lifted their heads and looked at him with quiet, well-bred curiosity. The gentle animals, exhaling their breaths on the windless day, quickened the priest to reflection.

"Christ took the shepherd and the sheep," he mused, "to symbolize the intimate and tender relationship of rulers and people in His Church. The shepherd is watchful, solicitous, patient; the sheep docile, low-voiced, trustful."

Down at Regans' poor Jim tossed about on his bed like a pine tree in a gale. When Father John entered the room, the large eyes rested on the priest's face.

"How are you, Jim?"

"How am I?" the boy echoed, while his eyes searched the priest's countenance, as if trying to remember. Then after a little:

"Ay so, ay so; yes, you're Father John."

"Yes, I'm Father John, come down to see you. You're a sick boy, and that's why I'm come. And Jim, dear, when we're very sick, we're like a man walking a tight wire trying to hold his balance."

"I know. Sure I saw him in the circus."

"Quite so. Sometimes he holds on and sometimes he falls off."

"He held on when I saw him."

"Quite so. But whether he falls off or holds on, if he's wise he'll have a net under him so he won't be hurt if he should fall."

"Ay. 'Twill be all aequal to him thin, sure."

"Now, Jim, as I said, when we're very sick we're like the man walking the wire. Eternity is under us. Do you understand?"

"No."

"Quite so, indeed. Eternity goes beyond our deepest sounding," mused the priest.

"Well, the life to come is under us. 'Tis a long, long fall from this life to the life hereafter. Confession and Holy Communion and Extreme Unction are the nets to soften the fall. 'Tis better to fall on a net that yields under us than on the rough, hard ground; and 'tis easier to fall on God's yielding mercy than on His hard justice. Do you follow me, Jim?"

"I do; 'deed I do. An' if you give me the net I'll take it."

Simply, by means of little illustrations from the life which the sufferer knew, the priest explained Confession,

Holy Communion and Extreme Unction. Jim could not keep apart sharp-edged distinctions, nor did the priest make any attempt to draw them. He arrived at the truth, half-hidden in the mists of his feebleness, that Holy Communion is receiving God, dwelling in some mysterious way in a small circular-shaped piece, that looks like very white bread, that Confession is telling our sins to a priest through whom God forgives us if we are very sorry.

The days went and Jim grew weaker. Then one summer morning Father John went down the growing country bearing the Bread of Life in the little brown burse which the nuns had made for him. The sun burned like a great sanctuary lamp from the blue of the sky; the yellow-hearted daises, fringed with white, adorned the level fields below Ballyadan; thrush and linnet and robin sang their hymns to the Presence as It passed. We always knew when Father John carried the Blessed Sacrament. It was not the little black bag he had in his hand, nor the silk string around his neck that told us. Indeed, it was not anything he carried that served as a sign. It was himself. His face was very still and very grave; he walked gently as if he were edging his way through the angels; his salute was a nod, and he never looked when he nodded.

"Have you brought Him?" asked Jim, his face as wan as the pillow.

"Yes," answered Father John ever so gently. Members of the family crept into the room and knelt down.

"I was dramin' of Him this mornin'."

The priest went on with his preparations for giving the Holy Viaticum. He read a short, sweet prayer of welcome which the sick boy recited after him and then he placed the Bread of Life on the parched tongue of

the sufferer. The family and the priest retired to the kitchen and Jim was alone. A little later the priest returned.

"Are you feeling better, Jim dear?" asked Father John.

"Yeh no; I'm very tired and goin' like. But 'tis aequal now an' He with me, for I'll fall into the net."

The eyes closed languidly, the head tossed from side to side. The priest saw that Jim was passing out. He placed the white Crucifix to the lips of the dying boy and ejaculated the Holy Name.

Jim opened his dimming eyes feebly and murmured "Jesus!" A few moments later he took the priest's right hand between his hands, now growing moist and cold, and murmured:

"I'm fallin'—fallin', but He's with me, so—so—'tis aequal."

A little twitching of the mouth, a little turning of the head, a little convulsive tightening of the hands on the hand of the priest, a gasp, one heavy breath, and Jim Regan had fallen off the wire of life to eternity.

The family came quickly to the bedside, while the priest stood watching the silent dead.

"Is it gone, he is?" asked Mrs. Regan, not yet understanding.

"Yes, gone," answered Father John.

"Sure he had hardly time to make his thanksgiving, and this the day of his First Communion," observed the mother.

"He will finish it in Heaven, where he is," answered Father John, as he passed out from the room.

V

THE STRANGER.

THE autumn was on us with summer only a melancholy memory. The bees that droned above the June roses still droned around faded spears of grass, but the roses were gone; the trees waved their salutations when the wind came gently from the nearby sea, but their leaves that awhile ago were soft with sap and green with life, now rustled below the bare feet of children returning from school. It was mid-afternoon, sombre and still. Father John had walked down to the north side of the parish to settle some dispute between a couple of neighbors, and was midway on the return journey.

We often wondered, to tell the truth, why he always walked forth and back, hither and yon along out-of-the-way paths, in among fields, instead of the white roads where cart wheels and the feet of people went unceasingly. Perhaps it was the wish to be alone which some men have. Silence makes us pensive and fills our day with the people of our dreams. In the silence memory comes and hovers, and brings back the friends who are away; from over a sea, that flings its spray on the edges of two continents, from over a continent that hears the music of two seas, they reach us. They greet us when they come, they converse with us, and when the hour comes—they go away.

Father John was just on the top of Progue's Point, with white-washed houses all along the valley below. He

walked through a gap in the stone ditch, where the herds went when passing from one field to another. To the right of the gap a man stood watching the level land extending from the base of the slope. His face was clean-shaved and thin; the edge of hair appearing below his hat shone white. One would say he was between sixty-five and seventy.

“Good evening,” said the priest resting his eyes for a moment on the face of the man.

“Good evening, Father.” The stranger lifted his hat like one accustomed to life’s niceties.

Father John was about to continue his journey, but something in the man’s quiet manner arrested him.

“You don’t live around here, do you? I ask, because I have a hidden conceit I know everybody within a radius of ten miles.”

“No, Father, I don’t live here—at least not now.”

“Maybe a native returned then?”

How quietly, without any least suggestion of shrewdness, did Father John put the question. The stranger looked at the priest and smiled ever so gently.

“Father, I have traveled and seen men. I’ve watched men’s eyes to read their souls. I’ve had to, else I mightn’t be alive to tell it. I don’t often answer a question that relates to myself. I can’t afford to. But now, and to you, ‘tis different. The truth is—I am a native returned.

“Ay,” was all the priest answered as he set off on his journey.

“Father,” the stranger called, “wouldn’t you like to hear my story? Maybe you’d find it worth listening to?”

Father John returned and leaned his elbows on the ditch beside the “native returned.”

"Every man has a right to his secrets," said the priest.

"Maybe 'tis because you do not seem curious to hear that I'm anxious to tell."

"Very well, I'll listen with interest."

"About forty years ago—or before you were born"—

"No, I'm forty-one."

"Well, you don't look it. At that time there used to be a house down near the base of Progue's Point on the west side where the land runs level to the river Deel."

"I know it; the four walls are still standing in from the road. I walked through the place only last week."

"Ay, that's it. Well, I used to live there about forty years ago with my father, mother and two sisters. Our next neighbor, a poor man with a large family, fell into hard luck with his stock for two years running, and in spite of his own pleading and the pleading of the priest, he was evicted just three days before Christmas. There was feeling galore all over this section of the country, and talk of armed resistance and what not. Well, it all came to nothing, of course, and the poor man and his family were pitched out on the road. I was loud in my talk about the shame of the thing, and said I would do this and do that, like any young fellow says whose feelings run ahead of his judgment. With the new year came an emergency man on the farm, and that meant no reinstatement of the tenant for years—if ever. The men of the neighborhood went wild with passion; it all seemed so inhuman and so unnecessary. They talked fiercely of the cruelty and injustice, and threatened vengeance. And in order not to set myself down in any

good light, I may say to you, Father, I was the wildest and fiercest among them. The government sent three policemen to guard the emergency man, but for all that he was shot through the heart one morning while counting some cattle in the middle of a large field. A slip of paper was found beside his body on which was written, 'The last resource of a famished people against a system.' I had been so loud in my protests, so insistent in demands for justice at any cost, that at once I was suspected. Besides, I had some education, having gone to the Monks' school in Adare for four years. An official of the government said, 'The bombast on the paper is written by a fellow with some education.' I had some education as I have said—not profound, you understand, but a smattering here and there with some small gift for making phrases in addition. I was suspected, and I knew it. To be done with protest and denial, let me say to you, Father—and it is now over a reach of forty years—I am as innocent of the death of that man as you are. But protesting one's innocence was of little use in those days—I find it isn't of much use nowadays either. The day on which the emergency man was killed I bade my people goodby and went into hiding, as we called it. That meant keeping under cover as best one could—here today and there tomorrow. Of course that couldn't last, running from cover to cover like a fox with the hounds giving tongue behind him. I knew it couldn't. The longer I kept on the run the less my chance for final escape.

"You didn't know Father Clancy, did you, Father? No, of course; he must be dead now thirty-seven or thirty-eight years. Ah, he was a man with a heart more

like the heart of Christ than any other man I ever knew. 'Tis no wonder we Irish at home and over seas love the priests, for I tell you they have stood between us and annihilation. Well, in the dark of the night, after a week of agony, running from hiding to hiding, I rang the door-bell of Father Clancy's house. The maid answered the bell.

"The priest,' I whispered.

"'Ay,' she answered, and went upstairs to tell him. I sat in the little parlor waiting, and watched the blaze from the coal fire in the grate. A chill wind blew down from the Ballyadan Hills and all the stars were hid behind folds of black clouds. As the clock finished striking ten, I heard steps coming down the stairs; then the parlor door opened and Father Clancy, wearing his soutane, stood in the middle of the room.

"'Father,' I cried, 'they're after me!'

"'I know that,'" he said, 'but there is no occasion for telling it to the whole world.'

"Then it came to me I had spoken too loud. The priest pulled down the blinds, lowered the oil lamp a little, and then sat down by the grate fire.

"'Come here,' he said in a voice so kind I shall hear it always. I sat beside him, facing the fire. I stole a look at his face on which the flames played. I have never seen a human face so sweet. It was not so much a beautiful face, as it was an open, benevolent face.

"'You didn't do that thing?' he said softly, looking at the fire.

"'I swear before God this night, I didn't.'

"'You needn't swear, my son. "Man's word is God

in man." If your word isn't good, I doubt if your oath would be.'

"'Father, I never did that thing,' I declared looking up at him.

"'I believe you,' he answered, resting his eyes on my face for some seconds.

"'Now, my son, you must get out of here—and you must get out of here soon.'

"'My heart sank within me for I thought he was going to turn me out.

"'They may not know you're here tomorrow, but they will surely know tomorrow week. So 'tis for you and me to waste no time making ready your escape.'

"'Father Clancy used to be an actor in his student days and made up the boys' faces to suit the characters they played.

"'You'll be a priest visiting me, and in a day or two you'll leave. Don't have much to say while you are here.'

"'Next day he made up my face and got me a clerical suit, and I looked for all the world like a young priest just out of Maynooth. I stayed with him for two days, walking out in his garden, but never speaking much to the people of the village.

"'All at once, on the third morning, the two of us went down to the village station and took the train for Limerick Junction and then Queenstown. Father Clancy had already secured me second-class passage for America, when we reached Queenstown, and the following morning I set sail for America. The last act of that noble priest when I left him before passing into the tender,

was to press two five-pound notes into my hand as he said 'Goodby.'

" 'Twill give you a start, my son, in a new world. Be careful, and keep as close to God as ever you can."

"The tears were streaming down my face as he waved 'Goodby.'

"His nephew, I suppose, goin' over to America for a few seasons before he gets a place here at home," said an old woman going out to the big steamer to sell lace.

"After I was a day out, I changed my clerical suit and became myself again. Fortune favored me in America, as it does many an Irish lad, for I made money in plenty out West in the mines. I will say, too, in justice to myself, that I didn't forget the great priest who stood by me in my distress, when I came into my own.

"And now, Father," he concluded, "you will understand why I'm not afraid to tell my story to a priest. They have faults, maybe, like the rest of us, but they never tell; no, they never tell."

"Father Clancy was the parish priest of Creelabeg, wasn't he, when he came between you and the law?" asked Father John, as he looked thoughtfully toward the white houses now losing their outlines in the falling darkness.

"Ay, Creelabeg."

"Well, I'm the parish priest there now."

"You are! Well, well, the kind God is still with me! So you are the parish priest of Creelabeg. Then you must let me shake your hand for your own sake and for the sake of him that's gone."

The priest and the exile shook hands.

“My name is Father Condon,” Father John said in his quietest manner.

“And my name, Father, is Hayes—John Hayes.”

“I have heard of you—your name’s a tradition here.”

“And you never said so all this time I’ve been telling you my story!”

“As I remarked at the beginning, a man has a right to his secrets.”

“Thank you, Father, thank you! You are generous,” said Hayes, visibly touched.

“And now, sir,” said Father John, in that grand manner that made us all love him, “I want you to come with me and spend the night in the house where you spent it years ago with Father Clancy.”

John Hayes, whose heart-aches for home forced him back to green fields and danger of arrest, spent a week with Father John. Together they stood above the grave of Father Clancy laid to rest in the chapel yard; together they climbed the Ballyadan Hills and saw the flat farms to the West, and to the East grazing cattle and sheep.

Then on Monday morning the exile said to the man of Maynooth culture: “I’ve seen his grave so still and shady back in the chapel yard; I’ve seen the fields where I wandered as a lad, the blue stream winding down over the meadows, and the Ballyadan Hills. And, Father Condon, I thank you whose heart is like the heart of Father Clancy, whose heart I know was like the heart of Christ Himself. Goodby. I’ve seen all I want to see, and I’m going back now. God bless you!”

“God bless and keep you!” answered the priest.

Well, you know we never found out who gave the marble altar to the memory of Father Clancy, which to tell the truth, was much too grand for the rest of the chapel, though not, of course, for the Lord of Hosts.

“Father John, who gave us the fine marble altar?” Mike’s Mikeen ventured one day, by virtue of his intimate position.

“A man has a right to his secrets,” answered the priest.

“Ay; or a nod is as good as a wink to a blind man,” ventured Mikeen oracularly.

“Quite so,” said Father John.

VI

CHOOSING THE PEOPLE.

THE Whitmores of Knockderrig were rich Catholics of the landlord class, who owned one-half the farms of Creelabeg parish. The "Great House" in which Captain Whitmore lived was set in some three hundred yards from the main road on the crest of a hill overlooking the river Deel. Although of the same Faith as the rest of the people, the Whitmores kept strictly within their class, never entering into the life of the rank and file. They were charitable enough, indeed, Mrs. Whitmore herself and Miss Emma and Miss Geraldine often ministering personally to the sick and the poor. But, as you know, it is one thing to help and to give as an angel out of the skies, and another to mingle with and live the lives of those we serve. Nor is this said in complaint. From the beginning till now there have been rich and poor, gentle and simple; and so, no doubt, it will be to the end of the world. Just as there are differences in the height of human beings, so there are differences in their worldly possessions and attainments. Religion cannot equalize people. All are free to kneel before the same altar, to receive the Bread of life at the same table, to confess and promise reparation within the same tribunal of mercy. Still, some are rich and gifted and some are poor and undistinguished; some walk the heights with the saints, and some are down in the depths thinking of God sometimes and striving a little to reach Him; or, perhaps, not thinking of Him at all. So you see, one has no fault to find with

the Whitmores of Knockderrig for living more or less remote from the rest of the parish.

All the priests we ever had were friendly with the family. It was very proper they should be, too, for the Whitmores served the chapel as no other family could. Every Saturday Miss Emma and Miss Geraldine decorated the altars with flowers from their own garden. Mrs. Whitmore played the little reed organ up in the gallery and the two young ladies sang. They donated rare flower vases, candlesticks, vestments, a set of silver-mounted Stations, not to mention hundreds of lesser gifts one forgets. So, all said, it was a special blessing to have such generous people within the parish limits of Creelabeg.

The Whitmores had a chapel in their own house where the priest read Mass once a month. Sometimes, too, they invited him over to tea at four o'clock, or to dinner at seven. We all thought it was very pleasant for our parish priests to have one family to whom they could go every now and then and feel at home. Of course, they went to the poor and the lowly, too, when they were sent for, and often when they were not. But with their nice discernment, the priests must have noticed that, try as they would, it was hard for plain people to be at ease in their presence. The art in serving lies in seeming not to serve.

Well, Father John, more than any of the priests who went before him, was always a welcome guest at the "Great House." He was brilliant in conversation, making language step gracefully off his tongue. He expressed his thoughts in unexpected fashion, and rarely allowed himself to run into the rut of an old phrase. But he was a man whose passion was the plain people,

who loved Ireland with the intensity of a fervid Fenian. So, of course, he felt every time he visited the Whitmores he must be silent on many a theme dear to his heart. Landownership by the people of the soil; the right on the part of a civilized race to govern itself; the over-ridden condition of the country from soldiers and constabulary. Indeed, well-nigh every theme was a forbidden theme; for, somehow, every theme led back to Ireland. Well, anyhow, Father John had all the instincts of a rare gentleman, and preferred to be silent or impersonal on many a subject rather than offend the man with whom he broke bread. But the longest boreen leads out to the main road some place, and the priest and the landlord came at last to where, in a sense, they reached the main road and parted company.

The early summer of '87 promised great crops. Green ridges of grain, and potato drills rich with promise were spread like the Garden of Paradise along the country-side. Men waited with hopeful hearts for the first potato-digging on the feast of St. James, and dreamed of wheat-ears "the full of a fist" in late August. But when the long, lingering days of mid-June came, little brown spots were seen on the wide leaves of the potato stalks.

"Great God," exclaimed Jim Ahern, "'tis the blight!"

It was. You have heard of the dread that falls on the inhabitants of a city awaiting the invading hosts when the first distant boom of cannon comes to them; you yourself have felt a mysterious catching at the heart when the heavens filled up with clouds, when the day grew dark and hot and very still, and when out of the west came the flashing light and the growling thunder. Well, that was Jim Ahern's feeling when he looked across

the potato field from Danaher road that day in mid-June; and that was how everybody in County Limerick felt a week later as signs became certainties. When a merchant sees his cargo sink below the salt waters at the rim of the bay, it is no wonder he is heart-sick, and the fruition of his hope lost almost within his grasp! When a man, after a long climb, loses his grip at last and falls back into the abyss, his seems an unmerciful fate! So, too, it was hard for all County Limerick to witness the green promise of late June blackened by the blight of early July. The blue and white blossoms withered and fell to earth; the stalks rotted and freighted the warm wind of the south with a sickening odor. Where before men labored with glad hearts to weed around the bending stalks and to put fresh earth against the drills, they now looked with tired eyes, dreaming of what might have been and was not.

When the November rents came due, Captain Whitmore sent out to his Creelabeg tenants the usual notices. The tenants had not the money to meet his demands. You cannot stop up a gap in a ditch with salt-water, as they say; neither can you pay a half-year's rent with 'trahneens.' Captain Whitmore did not like to evict any of his tenants; but, blight or no blight, he wanted his rents. He was in a dilemma, as Father Madigan used to say, and that is why he sought the aid of Father John.

The priest and the Captain were walking along the road below Progue's Point in mid-November. It was a sullen day, with never a sign of a smile over the blue face of Lough Derrig, nor a single tree nodding a salutation. Matted clouds were spread below all heaven, and crows, black and unlovely, flew close to earth cawing impudently.

"Father John, it has come to a pass where I've got to do something about my rents. I've had promises by the thousands, but no money. I'm convinced my tenants are playing on my good nature." The Captain showed some feeling as he spoke.

"Well," answered Father John, the quiet smile we all loved lingering on his lips, "I haven't been under the impression that people consider you a spendthrift in the matter of good-nature, my dear Captain."

"But, as a matter of fact, I am, Father John. I haven't evicted my tenants as hundreds of our landlords do, and I have permitted them to postpone payments almost every year. In return for my concessions here and my settlements there, I get a world of excuses, a poor mouth about the low prices this year and the failure of the crops next. If 'tisn't one thing, 'tis another. In fact, I'm getting so tired of it all, I have come to the conclusion I must have my rents."

"Captain, 'tis rather an unfortunate year in which to take so drastic a resolution. You know what the blight has done."

"I know—and next year there will be something else!"

"Now, Captain," said the priest, stopping in his walk and facing the landlord, "you speak as if your tenants have been doing nothing from year to year but shirking. As a matter of fact, I happen to know they have been making great sacrifices to meet their obligations. You are obsessed with the idea of pay, pay, no matter how. A five-pound note seems a trifle to you; 'tis a small fortune to some of your tenants. You assume that because they do not pay promptly, they do not wish to pay at all. As a matter of fact, when they do not pay, it is because they cannot."

"Father John, I know these tenants, and I know they put me last in their reckoning."

The priest smiled sadly as he looked at the Captain.

"You know them? No, no, Captain, you do not. You see them from the sunlight of your mountain-top. They seem puny in their world of the plains. They seem sniveling, whining peasants, who will lie for the sake of a few pennies, who cannot look a man in the face for fear he might read their hearts. Unconsciously, my dear Captain, you set them apart as serfs, bloodless creatures, created to serve. You think because they do not pay you, they are lying to you. You cannot conceive that they have human loves, human sympathies, human honor. You take the attitude 'get what you can willy, nilly.' Indeed, you do not know this people, Captain."

"Father John, will you please listen? I need the money as well as hundreds of other landlords all over the country, and it has come to such a pass that I must have it. And I'm going to ask you to use your influence to help me get it. Your people idolize you. They'll pay me my rent, as a matter of duty, if you tell them to pay. You surely can make them see their obligation to pay a just debt. I want you to help me, as a friend."

"Captain, I have influence with these people, if you choose to put it that way. I know their lives, lives of struggle against poverty and want. They get little, except what the earth gives, and when the earth's yield is affected they suffer. They struggle for the necessities of life, and the lords of this land are wasting its luxuries. I know, just as surely as I see you, that there are men of this parish, tenants of yours, who are asking

a merciful God to show them a way to find food to feed the waiting mouths of little children tomorrow morning. You ask me to use my influence with these people to secure you your rent. Let me state a more humane proposition. Let me use whatever small influence I may have with you to secure for our people, yours and mine, consideration and mercy in this time of distress."

"So, so. You would turn your guns on me; you would have me surrender; you would have me make whatever concessions are to be made."

"Captain, you neither surrender nor concede. You show mercy, if you are merciful."

"Father John, I asked you to help me in a small way; I asked you to urge your people to give me what is due me, and what the law of the land will let me have. I will not step down to mention my services and the services of my family to the religion we hold in common. I scorn to call to your mind my ministrations and my people's ministrations to these tenants. You know them, you must know them. Very good. Now comes the one moment of all my years when I ask a priest whom I esteem highly, whose interests I have followed, to render me a service, and I take it, he refuses."

"I cannot urge a tenantry to pay rents, when their children are hungry," answered the priest, his voice full of emotion.

"You can serve a man who has served you and those who came before you for years and years," said the Captain bitterly.

"When a service to my best friend works injustice to a people, then I may not serve that friend."

"Then, as between me and the people, you choose the people."

"Yes, I choose the people."

The Captain shook hands with the priest, lifted his tweed cap and walked the road west to the "Great House." Father John watched the frowning sky through the falling darkness. The face of Lough Derrig was as still as the face of the dead, and the air was silent, for the crows had winged themselves to their forest homes.

Said Jim Donnelly to Johnny Magee a year later:

"The Whitmores don't seem to be as 'great' with Father John as they used to be."

"They don't, man, an' I wonder why?"

"Maybe they wanted him to do somethin' he didn't want to."

"An' wouldn't he?"

"Oh, faith, he's o' that kind, he wouldn't if he didn't want to."

VII

THE HOLY FATHERS

THE fourth Sunday in May, at the last Mass, was the time set for the Mission to begin. Father John announced it from the altar two weeks before so we had time enough to think it over and, above all, to talk it over. We hoped and prayed that the weather would be fitting,—still days with the sun warm on all the land, calm nights and the sky pulsing with millions of stars. We knew there would not be so much work by then, for the potatoes would be “set” and the oats would be ready to peep above the ground. It would still be a little early to cut the meadow-hay, and the clover would already be made into “cocks.” So, all said, the time was wisely selected by the wise head of Father John.

And then they came, that Sunday when daisies showed white and yellow on every field. God blessed us, too, with a blue sky and a warm sun as we had hoped. All the world about was still, as if listening, and a gentle wind came up from the mouth of the Shannon. The chapel was crowded to the doors; and beyond the doors out on the gravel men knelt or stood with bared heads during the holy Mass. Then when Father John had finished the Sacrifice and the little clerk had snuffed out the candles, Father Driscoll, the Franciscan, came out from the sacristy to preach the opening sermon. He was a man of average height, rather stout, dark complexioned with large, frank eyes. He looked at us for a period of twenty seconds before ever he said a

word at all. Maybe it was to get his ideas into formation for marching, or maybe to take mental accounting of our souls' condition: whether he should preach heaven or hell or purgatory or salvation through striving or judgment after death. One does not know. Anyhow, after his survey, he began with the single word: "Beloved." Father McCarthy always started out with "My Brethren," sounding the first *e* like *u*. Father John said "My dear Brethren," or "My Brethren"; but sometimes, when thoughts surged against his brain; when, as we say, he was full of a subject and ideas sought an outlet, he began with a rush not saying "Yes," "Ay," or "No" to anybody.

Well, when Father Driscoll said "Beloved," we thought it was a word peculiar to the diction of the "Holy Fathers," and that helped all the more to get what may be called the Mission atmosphere. To people who live in the hollow places of the world and who see none of the splendors of the heights, any little departure from the life they know quickens interest. That is why the brown habit and the white cord and the hood and the single word, "Beloved," suggested the strange, the mysterious and the far-away.

So many days have come and gone since that still, warm Sunday in late May, one does not remember any more the opening message of the Mission. One remembers the splendor of the sunlight, the listening throng, the attitude of the preacher and the cadences of his voice. These form a picture that holds a quiet corner all to itself in the memory.

Father O'Kelly, the other preacher, was a slim man with a face as thin and as sweet as the face of St. Anthony, whose statue was set in our chapel next to the

Blessed Mother herself. One cannot be sure, of course; but I think Father Driscoll's chief mercy was to pour the vinegar of cleansing on the wounds of our souls, while Father O'Kelly's great ministration was to lessen the smart with the oil of soothing. Each had his special work—to cleanse or to soothe. The vinegar was necessary, no doubt; but we liked the oil better. A wise God does not create all priests of a mould. Some must do the hard, unlovely work, must pluck bad habits out of our souls as we pluck a thorn out of the foot of a child. In doing so they hurt us, of course, but they cannot help that.

So one does not set Father O'Kelly beside Father Driscoll for the sake of making what our own Father John would call "an invidious comparison." No, indeed. They went together doing good everywhere, the one supplementing and completing the other. Father O'Kelly was what you would call a quiet preacher. His thoughts were not billows breaking on the rocks with a rumble; no, they were like the waves of Lough Derrig, running upon the sand with a long swish. He preached one sermon on our Lady which Mr. Sullivan, the school-teacher, made us write down and keep.

"That is literature," he said; "keep it always."

"God set her in His Heaven," is a paragraph one recalls, "a virgin and a mother. The virgin, she typifies that which makes woman fairest—purity; a mother, she typifies that which makes woman most lovable—motherhood. You young women may look to her and see in her your model—the maiden undefiled, the lily without spot; you mothers may look to her and see in her unselfish love of offspring, her gentle fostering, her uncomplaining watchfulness examples of the virtues that

must find root and blossom and fruitage in your lives. We are all called to serve, but the service of each is somehow peculiar. Some serve in the school, in the orphanage, by the sick bed; some in the home showing small hands how to join in prayer, young eyes how to raise in adoring love, young lips how to whisper the sweet Name. It matters not where we serve or how lowly the service. She—Mary Virgin, Mother—is the fair model of us all. We can not *reach* up to her—she is too high in the Heaven of her holiness; but we can *look* up to her and call to her out of the darkness of our world to the world made bright by her shining.”

One cannot begin to tell of the personal visits made to the poor and afflicted by these dear priests during their two weeks' sojourn among us. Mrs. Donovan who was bedridden for years, Maggie Noonan whose mind became affected in a strange way and imagined all kinds of horrors, Tom Condon who drank a bit at times, John Hogan, grown despondent because he lost a splendid position in Dublin through his own carelessness—these and ever so many others were seen and counselled and consoled; many of them received new hope for a fresh start. Then on the last Sunday we had the great Mission-procession after the last Mass. The day, like all the days of the two weeks, was warm and still. Immediately to the west of the chapel a field lay flat above the town. At one corner of the wide acres Jim Donnelly and a couple of the boys, at the bidding of Father John, erected a great black wooden cross to which the white Figure was transfixated. How solemn the massive crucifix appeared under the still, sunlighted heavens that day as you looked toward the field from the edge of the town! It made you think of Calvary and His dear, bruised

body against the dark horizon. Only there was no rolling thunder, no cleaving of mountains, no white-faced dead awakened out of their graves from the horror that He was killed. The people of Creelabeg did not shake their clenched fists at the Sign looking down on them from the Mission Field that Sunday, as did the Jews when they looked at Him in the hours of His thirst and nakedness beyond Jerusalem.

It was one o'clock before the head of the procession went through the chapel gates. There was the boy with the cross, and a clerk with a lighted candle at either side of him; came the school children next, certain chosen ones bearing blue-and-white banners, with Mr. Sullivan leading the Rosary. Jim Donnelly, carrying a great silken standard, cross-mounted, preceded the men for whom Captain Whitmore said the "Hail Mary." There were probably four hundred men, all told, of every size and age. The deep hum of their answering "Holy Mary" was pleasing to hear that summer day. The young ladies of the parish, whom Father John organized into a sodality, prayed and sang alternately; the married women followed, but they made no attempt at song. One sees, to be sure, more imposing processions every month of the year; processions in which scarlet, and purple, and white, and cloth of gold are harmoniously blended; processions in which bands fill the sunshine with sound, and in which the swords of belted soldiers flash and grow dim. But, somehow, over wide seas and long years, those simple, unbedecked men, those women and children moving slowly around Mission Field above Creelabeg, the White Figure watching them from the cross, quicken the pensive mood and the sigh for the long ago.

We were lonely when the "Holy Fathers" left us the

next Monday morning for a mission somewhere else. Those of us who lived out in the country missed the sensation of walking up the fields calm evenings under the stars. We missed the forceful sermons of Father Driscoll and the gentle preachments of Father O'Kelly. The two women out from Limerick to sell religious articles packed their tents into donkey carts and went to another town; the great Crucifix was taken down from its high position at the end of the field and looked no more toward Creelabeg; the chapel bell did not bid us hurry for the Rosary, sermon and Benediction; the children did not go to the chapel any more at three o'clock to say the Stations. All these ripples in our quiet life had ceased, and the stream ran on as always.

Yes, the "Holy Fathers" were indeed gone, leaving us better for their coming but sadder for their going.

"I'm not the same man any more since they came here," Johnny Mangan confided to Mike's Mikeen one day at the west end of the bridge, shortly after the "Holy Fathers" had left us.

"How do you mane?" asked Mikeen.

"I mane I'm better like. An' I hope I'll sthay so."

"Well, sure that's what they came for, man, to make you better."

"Ay, but sometimes you shoot into a flock o' crows an' you miss a powerful lot o' thim."

"Well, they didn't miss you anyhow, so 'tis all aequal."

"Ay, 'tis so. I'm better in earnest now—if I only stay better."

VIII

DOLORES.

“MARY DOLORES” was how they named her when she was christened on the Feast of our Lady’s Seven Sorrows. Two strange facts followed soon after which you would never understand at all if you understood Creelabeg. First of all, people dropped the “Mary” and called the child “Dolores”; and secondly, they never shortened “Dolores” to “Doll” or “Dolly.” Mike Hannon of Fennora used to say there were seven things the mind of man could never fathom, one of which was the source of the tide. To the seven must be added two new ones: the survival of the name “Dolores” and its survival without abbreviation. “Dolores” seemed a name too remote from the lives of plain people to be used in every-day speech; also, it seemed much too splendid for one whose retreat was set with the simple poor in the valley of life. It must have been a special favor from our dear Lady herself that the child had so lovely a name and that nobody ever dropped a single one of its sweet syllables.

Well, then, Dolores Egan was born at the west side of Progue’s Point, where the sun came all the afternoon, and was baptized Seven Sorrows’ Day by Father McCarthy some years before he went away. Her dolors began before she felt their weight. On her second birthday her young father was drowned while swimming back in the river Deel one Sunday after Mass. John Egan was just twenty-three when he was called so suddenly, leaving behind him a wife a year younger than himself.

Young Mrs. Egan, (she used to be Anna McCabe) died six months later giving birth to her second girl. The infant lived an hour and was baptized by Mrs. Hackett before it gave up its young life. There had been many sad funerals at Creelabeg, for the years are long and death comes strangely, but never in all memory was anything so weighed with woe as was the placing away of Mrs. Egan and her second girl. She lay white and still in the coffin, the child beside her. She had a sweet face, for Anna McCabe was as lovely a woman as you would meet anywhere from Creelabeg to Athery. It seemed such a pity to see her taken and a little girl of two years left alone behind her! It was sad enough when John himself was claimed by the swift waters of the Deel, but it seemed the very crown and completion of sorrow when the mother had to answer the summons. However, there is no use gainsaying the will of a wise God.

Dolores was eight years old, when Father John came to Creelabeg. She lived with her grandmother, Mrs. James Egan, just at the edge of the village, while the farm below Progue's Point was "let" to one John Sullivan from Drunmore. She was nine short years when she injured her spine while lifting a bucket of water back at Feeney's well. The doctors went again and again and explained her trouble to be due to one cause today and to another tomorrow; but for all their visits and explanations Dolores remained the same white-faced, fragile child. Then Father John said to her grandmother:

"Mrs. Egan, let the doctors go for the present. She doesn't improve any under their care; maybe God doesn't want her to get well for some wise purpose of His own."

That was why the doctors ceased visiting and writing prescriptions, and that was why Dolores sat in the sun all the early part of the day when the sun was warm. Mary Condon, who had gone to the Nuns' school in Ardee for several years, gave her lessons in reading, writing, grammar, history, plain and fancy sewing every morning. Dolores had a quick mind that took in a truth with ease and retained it for always; so when she reached her fifteenth year she was still white-faced and fragile, but notably well informed. Many a summer morning on his way out from the village to the green country he loved, Father John lingered with Dolores where she sat beside the door in the warm sunlight. One day he asked:

“Dolores, what are you reading?”

“Ninety-Eight.”

“Ninety-Eight! That's a battle chant, and you're no soldier, my Dolores.”

“No, but the heart of a soldier is in me,” she cried, her eyes shining blue below her wan forehead. “Am I to read it?”

“Ay, 'tis battle. Yes, read; it makes the heart heavy because it recalls great, sad moments on which hung destinies; but go on, read anyhow, and put fire into it, Dolores.”

Ah, then you should have heard her flinging defiance at cowards from her chair in the sun:

“Who fears to speak of Ninety-Eight?
Who blushes at the name?
When cowards mock the patriot's fate
Who hangs his head for shame?”

Ah, and you should have heard the low plaintiveness to quicken tears as she read:

“Some on the shores of distant lands
Their weary hearts have laid,
And by the strangers’ heedless hands
Their lonely graves were made;
But though their clay be far away
Beyond the Atlantic foam,
In true men like you men
Their spirit’s still at home.”

“That will do, my child, that will do,” said the priest when Dolores had finished the poem.

“What else do you do besides reading?” he asked preparing to continue his walk.

“Sometimes I write letters to a few friends.”

“Ay; but that doesn’t fill the day. Isn’t there anything else?”

“Not much else, Father. Sometimes I sew a little—but there isn’t so much of that to be done.”

“Quite so. But you’d have time to do sewing, or, say, fancy work if you got it?”

“Oh, surely, Father. ’Tis what I’m waiting and praying for—a little more to do.”

Two weeks later Sister Margaret of the Nuns’ School at Ardee called to see Dolores. She was a pleasant woman, midway in life, whose sympathies were spent on the poor and suffering.

“Dolores, you’re always in the summer here.”

Dolores rested her eyes for a moment on the nun’s face and smiled as she answered:

"Not always, Sister. Often the mist that gathers at the base of Progue's Point remains all the day and then the sun never shows. Besides, the south-west wind brings the rain sometimes, and I must stay inside then."

"Well, when 'tis raining, or when the fog doesn't steal off to the sky by way of Progue's Point, let there be summer in your heart. No matter how dark the day we can keep light and warmth there."

"The nuns can, who are so near God," answered the sick girl suppressing a sigh.

"Yes, and you can—and everybody can. Being a nun doesn't put you in the seventh Heaven."

"Maybe not, but nuns seem always so happy."

"They have their crosses too, child."

The admission that, even to those who live away from the world and its temptations, suffering comes, consoled Dolores because she felt less alone. Good people are always happy to share their joys with others, but there is a sense of comfort in feeling that they can share their sorrows with people also.

"Dolores," said Sister Margaret before leaving, "I have brought you some sewing and fancy work. It will help to keep you busy, and when we're busy we're less alone."

The girl's eyes brightened. She had no need to say her thanks; her happy face spoke them for her. Father John never told Dolores that it was he who got Sister Margaret to secure the fancy work to keep her fingers busy, because Father John never published his good deeds. His chief purpose was to render service; the service rendered he gave his thought to other work.

One day in late Spring Mike's Mikeen cut his finger while trimming the hedge at the end of Father John's

garden. Straightway he made for the edge of town where Dolores sat sewing.

"Dolores, 'tis kilt I am!" exclaimed Mikeen.

"You don't look it," Dolores assured him, her eyes full of laughter.

"But I'm bleedin', girl; bleedin' powerful!"

"Let me see."

Shutting his eyes tight lest he might witness the horror, Mikeen presented his bleeding finger. The cut was deep but not alarming.

"I'll fix it for you," said Dolores, with rare confidence.

"I don't think you can," said Mikeen. "I believe I must get the docther."

"Nonsense. Don't I know?"

"Ay, maybe; but I'm afeerd."

Presently Dolores had strips of white cloth and a mysterious ointment. She cleansed the wound while Mikeen kept his eyes on the horizon exclaiming, "Ou!" and "murther!" and "'tis terrible entirely!"

But when the wound was cleansed and the flow of blood stopped he forgot his horrors and said:

"Dolores, an' I was goin' to marry I'd marry you."

"Be off with your assurance!" cried Dolores, her eyes laughing again.

"An' why wouldn't I?" asked Mikeen.

"An' why wouldn't you!" she echoed. "Well, you wouldn't, because I wouldn't first."

"Faith, thin, you might go farther and fare worse."

"Be off I tell you! And I tell you again, be off!" cried Dolores giving his hand a healthy prod of her needle.

"Murther, girl, murther! Sure 'tis into the bone you druv it."

“ ‘Tis into your heart I’ll be sending it, I’m thinking.”

“Ah, I’ll say nothin’ thin, ‘cept to go to th’ other side o’ the road whin I see you comin’.”

“Yes, and go back now to the priest’s garden and be glad I didn’t make your finger worse than ‘twas.”

“That was why I didn’t say anythin’ till you were ‘bout finished.”

Dolores laughed, and Mikeen grinned comprehendingly.

“Well, I’m goin’.”

“Go!” she commanded with a grand wave of the hand.

“But just the same, an’ there’s a girl I know, not sayin’ who she is or nothin’, but just the same, an’ I was goin’ to marry I’d marry her.”

“Be off now—yourself and your blarney!”

A month later Mikeen stopped before Dolores’ chair on his way to Ardee.

“Dolores,” he said, “ ‘tisn’t that I’m sayin’ anythin’ or manin’ anythin’, but I know a fine boy as says, an’ he was goin’ to marry he’d marry a nice girl as he knows.”

Long after Mikeen had continued on his journey the laughter that brought the tears to Dolores’ eyes had not yet died down.

Of course, I needn’t tell you Dolores never married Mikeen. She sat in the sun when the sun was warm; but when the rain followed the wind from the southwest or when the mist lingered around the base of Progue’s Point she tried hard to keep the sun in her heart. Yet not altogether; for she shared the sun that was in her heart with others whose lives were mostly in shadow.

IX

A GLIMPSE OF THE SEA

WE NEVER referred to the Sunday instruction of the children as "Catechism," "Sunday School," "Religious Instruction" or "Christian Doctrine." It always went by the indefinite name, "Classes." Of the classes there were two, three or more, depending on the number of children. In Creelabeg we had Classes between first and second Mass, whereas down at Athery and up at Ardee they never took place till after last Mass. It was Father John himself who made the change, and we prayed our dear Lady herself to bless him for it. You see last Mass usually began at noon, which, with the sermon and, maybe, Benediction lasted an hour and a half. Classes followed for another hour; and by the time you were home and had dinner it was half-past three o'clock. So you missed half the hurdling or the football match or the regatta or the field sports or whatever other Sunday diversions might be on.

Classes were taught by the schoolmaster, the schoolmistress, the assistants and the monitors. The boys were graded in semicircles on St. Joseph's side of the chapel, the girls on the Blessed Virgin's side. We never sat: in fact our chapel had no pews except in the gallery.

After Classes were well under way Father John came out from the sacristy and spent some minutes with each division. Sometimes he asked questions, sometimes he explained a doctrine or a practice of the Church; or maybe he told us a story about an Irish saint of whom

we had never heard, but, who, no doubt, occupies some secluded nook in Heaven.

“And now, James,” he said to Jamie Hackett, only he would never say “Jamie,” “what is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment?”

“Murther, quarrelling and revinge,” answered Jamie.

Father John had a heart of iron when it came to mispronouncing words; it was one of the seven deadly sins against language. He turned to Mr. Sullivan.

“Why will these boys, all our people in fact, commit crimes against pronunciation. Why, for example, will they call ‘m-u-r-d-e-r’—‘murther’?”

“No doubt it is the retention of the old Irish sounds. English is only our stepmother tongue. Our mother is dead.”

Now Father John liked Sullivan. They were both of an age, both had like tastes, and both were essentially the same in politics.

“My dear Sullivan,” said the priest in an aside, “you’re singularly brilliant today.”

“The effect of your sermon this morning, my Father,” answered the teacher.

“Man, you flatter!”

“Nay, my Father; we may flatter mediocrity. Greatness we praise.”

“That’s enough!”

Resuming his instructions:

“James, how do you pronounce m-u-r-d-e-r?”

“Murther,” James repeated.

“No, no! What do you call the crime of killing somebody—a landlord, a policeman or an emergency man?”

“Murther.”

“Listen! ‘Tis not mur-*th*-er; tis mur-*d*-er.”

“Yeh, sure, ‘tis aqual so he kills him, if he’s a landlord, a peeler, or an emergency man,” said Jim Donnelly to Johnny Magee as both waited outside the chapel gate for last Mass.

“Whist, or we’ll all be murthered if he hears you,” cautioned Johnny.

Well, at last Jamie got his tongue to say “murder” instead of “murther” and Father John visited the other classes. He had a word of praise for any bright lad who answered promptly and with coherence. He encouraged originality, oftentimes preferring a boy to word a truth after his own manner than after the manner of the book. He had his pockets full of coppers for the very young children, giving a penny and a word of praise to those who deserved, and very often to those who did not. Then when the time came to vest for the last Mass he said in his gentlest manner.

“Well, good-by now, children. You have been to Mass and to Classes; you have prayed to God, and have tried to learn a little more about Him. So you may spend the rest of the day in the sun.”

Mr. Sullivan offered up the “Hail Mary”; we answered the “Holy Mary,” and went along the roads or across the fields to our homes.

One never forgets a Monday in mid-June when Father John gave us all such a surprise as no boys or girls in all Ireland ever received before.

“Children,” he announced shortly after entering the school, “you have been so regular at Classes and studied so hard all through the long winter, I’m going to take you down the river next Wednesday to the Shannon and then on to the sea.”

Joy for the news made us dumb. Our eyes grew large for wonder and delight, but we did not utter a syllable. Then Mr. Sullivan said ever so kindly:

“Boys, aren’t you forgetting your manners? Have you nothing to say?”

Ah, indeed we had, but the words were choked down in our hearts somewhere and would not come! The best we could do was to murmur

“Thank you, Father!”

It made no difference. Our dear priest understood us; he knew what we would say, if the words only came.

You should have been with us that morning when we took the excursion boat at Creelabeg quay for the Shannon and the sea. The day—ah, one never forgets that! Just as if the kind God had set it apart over all the years especially for us! It was so calm, every green leaf on the maples back in the chapel yard lay motionless in the heat; the smoke from the mill chimney climbed straight up till it vanished near the blue heavens; the court-house clock rang nine, and every stroke came to us unmixed with any other sound. The boat, given to Father John for the day by the Limerick Steamboat Company, proved to all the children a dream and a vision. There she lay, asleep, like a child, on the lap of the tide, her single smokestack breathing softly. Around her keel the incoming water babbled in the language of its mother, the sea. How white and prim and shining our boat looked under the golden sun which God loaned us especially for our journey! Coming down the quay we notice Father John and Mr. Sullivan and, behind them, the schoolmistress and a monitor. These are to keep patient watch over us until we get back home again.

Now we glide down the Deel flush with the tide. Trees, bending down over the banks on either side, rush by us as we speed along; shrubs, growing gardens, toiling men, houses, hills out of which gray rocks are protruding—all move in the opposite direction, and we with staring eyes and half-open mouths watch them as they go. The banks grow more apart as we near the Shannon and a soft wind blows in from the sea. The two rivers commingle and flow united to the west. To the north, over the great stretch of water, we see the hills of Clare. Whitewashed houses, red gardens and growing crops are seen indistinctly through the haze. And then, after two hours' ride, down the wide Shannon, we come upon the sea!

"There she is, as old as time!" said Father John to Mr. Sullivan as they both stood at the railing.

"And she is chanting too," said the teacher, as the boom of breaking waves came to us.

"Ay; there's no pause to her chant. Earth changes her face with the years, but the sea—ah, the sea is God's unchanging mirror yesterday, tomorrow and always."

Then he quoted Lord Byron's couplet:

"Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow:
Such as creation's dawn beheld thou rollest now."

What a vision to us, who had never seen it before, was that vast space of rolling water spread out before us, rising to the line of the horizon and then disappearing! What a sense of awe we felt as we approached nearer and nearer! But after we left the boat and walked over the fine, white sand we forgot our terrors. The sea that day was a friend, big but not menacing, that quickened

dreams in young fancies. While the children played in the sand or waded where the water was shallow, Father John and Mr. Sullivan sat on the edge of a cliff a short distance to north. The priest took off his hat and ran his fingers through his hair.

"Sullivan, why is it that the sea calls us with the voice of a siren? Why is it she draws us like the magnet draws the steel?"

"The mystery in her," answered Sullivan.

"Man, you answer oracle-fashion. 'The mystery in her,' you say. But isn't there mystery in the mountains, in the wide plains, in the heavens set with stars?"

"Yes, but we see them often—always. The ocean, once—like today. It is a vision, the joy of surprise,

"Like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other, with wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

"Perhaps you're right, my dear Sullivan. Maybe if you and I were living right here within sight and hearing of the gray old ocean we wouldn't have the rapture we're having now."

Far out, where the meeting of the sea and sky hid a vaster vision of waters, an ocean liner moved lazily to westward.

"Maybe she's taking the men and women of our race to the land of opportunity, America," mused the schoolmaster as he watched the great ship vanishing behind the silver haze.

"The land of opportunity, probably; but also the land of unrest. Do not make the mistake, my dear Sullivan, of so many: the mistake of measuring sense against spirit; the material things of the world against what St.

Paul calls 'the glories that are to come.' Many a man of our race,"—and here Father John waxed warm as he always did when a truth impressed him,—"many a man of our race has gone to America in the steerage, who in ten years came back first-cabin with the jingle of gold in every pocket. But let not that impress you. His body was in the steerage going; his soul, perhaps, was in the steerage when he returned. I'm tired hearing of what America has done for our race. What has she done? Given occupation for a wage, certain conveniences of life, larger freedom, possibly, here and there. What has she received? Men and women schooled in faith, observant and receptive; men with a keen sense for the niceties of life, adapting themselves readily to the conditions in which they find themselves; women, not grand in society elegance to be sure, but fair in that chastity for which they are held in distinction forever. Heart, and gentleness, and high courage, and vision, and love of law, and piety, and the virtues of the chimney corner are more important to the well-being of a country than are railroads linking ocean to ocean, or the telegram which is as swift as our thinking, or miles of tunnel, or the corn-exchange! Ireland has given to America her men and her women and America is richer. America has given to Ireland's men and women wealth and opportunity and, in a sense, a broader horizon. Some of these men and women have risen to eminence in that new world out in the west; but the sweet Faith that has made our people the race of eternity—sometimes they lose that. They have gathered in the wealth of time, but are robbed of the riches of Heaven. I'm not finding fault with America, mind you. Only, too often we are reminded of all that we receive; too seldom we get a word

of thanks for all we give, or a word of sympathy for all we lose, after we have given. Man, listen! This land is large enough for all—only a blundering government has trampled on its riches for three hundred years! Sullivan, I could spend the rest of my life collecting the broken pieces of Ireland's might-have-beens."

The ship to west had passed beyond the line of the horizon. The priest and the teacher looked in the direction whence she had vanished.

"She's gone," murmured Sullivan.

"Ay, gone, bearing those brothers and sisters of ours to where the snow lingers till mid-June, to where the cactus is in bloom the winter through."

That evening, as we steamed up the Deel against the returning tide, Father John said to a group of us:

"Children, how do you like the sea?"

"I like the sound of the waves," answered Johnny Noonan.

"An' 'tis so big and goes so far away till it meets the sky!" murmured Mary Shea.

"An' it rises and falls like trees in the wind," added Mary Shea's little sister, Anna.

"The young dreamers, they have it already, the vivid fancy of the Celt. It is his strength," mused Father John. Then in a moment he added somewhat sadly: "And his weakness."

X

BOGARA FEH

MAURICE DEMPSEY was his real name. "Bogara Feh" was the name he went by. He was a prim man well on to seventy, wore a frieze coat, brown trousers and a well-laundered collar that fell neatly over a black tie. On week days he sat on a wooden bench outside his grocery store, unless he were busy back of the counter with a customer. Sometimes he prefaced a statement with the phrase "As I'm an honest man," for no reason that we could think of except, perhaps, to add solemnity to what he proposed saying.

"An' why mightn't I say, 'I'm an honest man' just as well as Bogara Feh?" Mike's Mikeen asked Father John one day, while digging August potatoes in the priest's garden.

"You might, only it would be what the critics of the drama call, 'out of character'—just as if we were to represent Dean Swift saying the Rosary."

"O faix, I don't know about that at all, nor about Dane Swift aether. But, anyhow, I call myself an honest man."

"Not all that cry, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," quoted Father John.

"Manin' what?" asked Mikeen with the quizzical look that never failed to awaken laughter in the priest.

"Meaning, that not every self-justified Pharisee shall sit with the elect in the house of multitudinous mansions."

"Yerra, faith, if you talked like that when announcin' the Stations or the Aesther collection you wouldn't get a hapurth at all. But I'll ingage your Reverence is much plainer thin."

Well, Bogara Feh was a link that held together the life of our own day with the life of the long ago. A sort of seer he seemed, come out of the past, enveloped in the mists of legend and battle chant and bardic tale. When his gentle eyes looked up at you from below his great, gray eye-brows, you would think some song-maker from Brian's palace of Kincora had survived somehow over the long, changing years.

As you must have surmised already, Bogara Feh was a special favorite of Father John. A man of vision and temperament and quick fancy has a fondness for whatever awakens dreams. Many an afternoon, when the flags of the foot-path were warm under the sun, the priest spent an hour sitting on the wooden bench with the kindly old man.

"'Tis a brave race of ours, Father John," said Bogara Feh.

"Ay brave, but not wisely brave," corrected the priest. "Not brave with keen leadership, nor brave with restraint."

"We have fought them well, Father John."

"In bits and scraps, yes; a dash here and a flash there; in Wexford a little, in Kildare a little; some spirit at Limerick, and a rainbow of promise when the men of the north were reviewed on College Green. Fought well,—yes; but organized without system and led without calmness or vision."

"As I'm an honest man, Father John, I ask your pardon; for I must beg to differ."

“ ‘Tis all a matter of opinion, and you have a right to yours.”

“Ay so, an’ thank you, Father John. Well, now, take Lisnadthula near Ballyannan in the forties. We had a laether thin, an’ we had the spirit, an’, as I’m an honest man, we had the fight in us—only there was no fight.”

“Tell it all to me and I’ll be the better judge,” requested the priest who was eager to hear the old man’s narrative.

“In Lisnadthula it was,—in the forties. We were a hundred an’ fifty min, an’ a captain an’ two sergeants an’ a bugler, an’ the man with the flag. The sojers were in the barracks at Lisnadthula an’ the boys wanted to storm the place and take the town. The whole county was in a bad timper at the time, so the sojers were stationed with us for a year. We wanted the town, for ‘twas our town an’ the town of our fathers, an’ we didn’t want red-coats marching up an’ down its streets with their high boots an’ spurred heels. Fagin it was—our captain—who marched us eight by eight down Moylan’s road under the moon. We had no guns, but we had pikes which we carried on our shoulders; an’ we had ne’er a belt nor a sword aether, ‘cept the captain an’ the two sergeants. We stopped at the edge o’ the town when the captain said, ‘Halt!’ Then he spoke to us, and his words were these: ‘Min o’ Lisnadthula, ‘tis for us to fight an’ drive the sojers out o’ the barracks before to-morrow mornin’. We’ll surround the buildin’ an’ whin I give the order, d’ye charge. Now march on!’ Well, we marched till we reached the gate ladin’ to the yard where the sojers drilled. We silenced the sintry, marched

through an' surrounded the buildin'. Our captain struck the door with the hilt o' his sword.

"'Who's there?' says the man inside.

"'Open!' says our captain with a voice like thunder.

"Well, the man inside opened an' our captain says to him:

"'Surrinder!'

"'How many are ye?' he asks.

"'How many are we, is it, eh? We're one hundred and fifty strong!'

"'Yeh,' says the man inside, 'we're only fifty here.'

"'Thin surrinder!' says the captain again.

"Well, they surrindered that night—the fifty o' thim—and marched out the gate, their captain leadin', an as I'm an honest man, they wint the road eastward to Limerick. We followed them to the Ferry bridge, where we left them an' came back home."

There was a long pause until Father John asked:

"And then?"

"Thin those they could find of us were arrested two days later an' two hundred sojers were placed in the barracks by the ind o' the week."

"Well, then, what was the good of the exploit?" queried Father John.

"The good of it? Didn't we drive him out of the town an' didn't we do it without sheddin' their blood?"

"Ay," answered Father John in his loveliest manner, "but didn't they come back to town again without shedding *your* blood?"

"But wasn't there glory in it—drivin' them out ahead of us?"

"Was there?"

"Was there! Yeh, of course there was."

"One hundred and fifty driving fifty is not such a striking example of prodigious valor," said Father John with keen irony.

"Well, we did it anyhow, an' 'tis aequal now, for 'tis all over."

"Ay, 'tis over indeed—if it ever was."

The latter part of the sentence was hidden below the surface of language as sometimes a stretch of stream is hidden below the sands; hence the old man was not offended. Then the priest placed forefinger and thumb to his chin in a characteristic way and watched a white cloud drifting lazily to northward.

"O Ireland," he said in the tone he always used when his heart was full, "if only all your hopes saw fulfillment, what a fair nation you would be now!"

"You're lonesome like, Father John," said Bogara Feh, looking at the priest with sympathy.

"Thinking saddens a man."

"Ay, 'specially if a man is lonesome like. 'Tis the same way with me too. I get sad sometimes sitting out here on the binch thinkin' o' Mary."

"Mary?"

"Ay, that's my woman dead an' gone—God rest her!—years before your Reverence came to us. An' as I'm an honest man, Father John, 'tisn't the same since she wint. She was sick a week an' a day, an' thin one night 'bout tin o'clock the Banshee began acroonin' back there where you see the ould gable covered with ivy."

The priest saw through the open back-door the wall covered with a thick matting of ivy vines around which noisy sparrows quarreled.

"She crooned an' wailed for three nights; thin the third night, all of a sudden, 'bout eleven o'clock, a wind

came moanin' down from the Ballyadan hills an' shook off every leaf from the ivy out there. The Banshee's wail rose above the wind sometimes, and sometimes it fell below an' sometimes her voice joined in with the voice of the wind. Mary died at twelve that night, an' the heart in me nearly broke to see her so white an' still. The roar of the wind died down after she died and the Banshee's wail became low an' soft an' far away like, till it died out entirely whin the day was breakin'. But an' whin it comes Christmas eve, at midnight, she always appears an' cries a *dhras* for Mary that's gone, an' for me that's waitin' my turn."

"That's what we're all doing—waiting our turn."

"Ay, waiting in line—like goin' to Confession."

There was a long pause. The white cloud still floated in the north and the sparrows scolded around the matted ivy.

"Did you know Father Madigan of Listownvarna, Father John?"

The priest shook his head.

"No, of course, you didn't. 'Tis thirty-five years now since he died. His grave is back in the chapel yard at Listownvarna,—the west side o' the yard it is, under an oak that's a hundred years old. 'Tis a year ago now since I stood above where he's sleepin' in the shadow of the oak. An' as I'm an honest man, Father John, the tears ran down my face thinkin' o' him. Ah, Father John, 'twas he was the laether o' min! Once, whin the sheriff an' tin peelers came all the way from Knockderrig to evict Mrs. Danahar, a widow o' the parish, who was down with the typhoid faever, Father Madigan met thim at the door o' the little house."

"'We must obey the law,' says the sheriff.

“‘The law of life comes before the law o’ the land,’ says Father Madigan.

“‘I have my orders and my orders are to have the door locked on an’ empty house before sundown.’

“‘Who gives you your orders?’

“‘They come from the high-sheriff?’

“‘An’ mine come from the high God. God commands me to save this life which He gave.’

“‘Move away from the door!’ commanded the sheriff.

“‘I can not. I must save this life. God has set me here between this woman an’ you.’

“‘Remove him!’ said the sheriff to the peelers. The peelers never stirred. ‘Remove him!’ the sheriff roared. The peelers remained where they were. ‘Then, you cowards, by the Lord, I’ll do it!’ But he didn’t; he stood rooted to the ground where he was.

“‘Evict her now! See, the door is open!’ an’ the priest flung wide the half-door.

“But they never moved; they were tied to the ground.

“‘Why is this dore?’ asked the sheriff all atremblin’.

“‘The law of life is above the law of man. The mandates of the high God come before the mandates of the high-sheriff.’

“That was how Father Madigan—God rest him!—saved the life o’ Mrs. Danahar when she was down with the typhoid faever.”

Going out through the quiet country on his afternoon walk a little later Father John was thoughtful and grave.

“When so-called Progress comes our way,” he mused, “Dolores and Mike’s Mikeen and Magee, the post-boy, and Bogara Feh, children of pain and laughter and love and dreams will pass away and be forgotten.

We shall have meat inspection, a better breed of cattle, a train to Shanagolden, and county supervisors to tell us how many germs we consume with every spoonful of soup. We shall have noisy officials inhaling the breath of the rose for microbes, and sipping the dew of the clover to find if it thins the milk of the Durham cattle. They will have us solicitous for what we shall eat and what we shall drink, hoping that we may live longer, whereas we should live more. Ay, some day they'll sterilize Bogara Feh's dreams lest some ghostly microbe of Brian's vanished age may still survive!"

When Father John returned from his walk, Mike's Mikeen was trimming the garden hedge.

"Father John," he said, straightening himself, "I don't like the summer half as well as I do the winther."

"Why?"

"Well, because in summer the day is so long, the dark is powerful slow comin'.

"Quite so; but the day is for labor,—and labor is sweet."

"Ay so; but an' you put four spoons o' sugar into your tay 'twill be too sweet. An' labor may be too sweet likewise if you put sixteen hours o' daylight into it."

"Ah, perhaps you would like to be the eleventh hour man of the Gospel then?"

"I would, if the boss wouldn't suspect I was waitin' an' give me the job in the mornin'."

"We must speak by the card or equivocation will undo us," quoted Father John as he went leisurely along the box-lined gravel walk to his house.

XI

THE WHITE WAKE.

MARY MADIGAN was leaving for Australia, and a "white wake" always preceded a leave-taking just as a "black wake" preceded a burial. Into the white wake there entered laughter and tears; somewhat like a spring day it was, when the wind runs high and sunshine follows on the heels of shadow.

As a sort of preliminary to it all came Mary's trunk out from Limerick, which caused Mrs. Madigan and her two other girls to weep softly, just as if the trunk were a coffin. One should not blame them either, since often the sea made the separation as complete as the grassy mound in the graveyard. Then as they folded and put in some little keepsake they wept anew.

Mary was to depart Tuesday morning at six o'clock. The Saturday previous she went to Confession, and received Holy Communion at first Mass on Sunday. How sweet and pure she looked as she knelt at the railing, the Bread of Life in her heart! Small wonder it was that half the parish was heavy-hearted to see her going from the dear land of settled quiet to the strange far-away land of unrest and adventure! And you could hardly blame the boys, kneeling over near the holy water font, if they stole a glance at her where she prayed below the great window to the south through which the sun came that morning. Mary went into the sacristy after Mass, which explained why Father John was late visiting Classes.

"Father, I come to say goodby," said Mary simply.

"And Mary, I wish it was 'I'm glad to be home again' you were saying instead."

"Thank you, Father John, and I wish it too. Indeed, 'tis I would like to stay at home, if I could."

"Ah, Mary, you're all going, all going, till in a few years only the sick and the old will remain. You are one of my girls—as good as Ruth amid the sheaves; ah, yes, it catches at the heart to see you go! The fields are green here, and heaven is blue and every stream has sunlight and song! No doubt, Mary, you're going because you wish to better yourself; and I wish to God I could do something to keep you and all our boys and girls at home! But no. The rivers run idly to the sea and turn no mill-wheels; a million hands are waiting to serve, but greedy Capital affords no service. And so you must go like the rest. But promise me, Mary—'tis the last time we'll ever meet here and therefore I ask all the more anxiously—promise me, you'll never turn back on your Faith, the Faith that alone can save. Will you promise?"

"Father, I will always be true to that; always—with the help of God!"

"Ay, with the help of God. And promise me you'll never forget your race, the race of saints and dreamers and bards and kings."

"I won't forget; I promise you I won't."

The girl caught some of the priest's emotion, for she spoke as if pronouncing a vow.

"God bless and keep you, Mary! May the voyage be calm and may the years be many that follow; many, yes—and full of peace!"

Mary knelt down and Father John gave her his blessing. They shook hands and she went away.

The priest stood at the sacristy door, folded his arms and looked across the flat country to the Ballyadan hills. The sun was on them that morning and a blue mist circled their base.

"I believe the wild longing for El Dorado, for the land of the bush and the land of the prairie, has so taken hold of our people they would not stay here now, if this were a land of plenty."

At Classes that morning, he asked little Mollie O'Neill:

"And what will you do, Mollie, when you're grown up?"

"I'll go to New York to my Aunt," answered Mollie.

"Even the children hear the Siren," said Father John to Mr. Sullivan; but none of us understood what he meant.

Well, they had the white wake at Madigan's at which Mary was, as they say, "the observed of all observers," like the bride at a wedding. Jim Donnelly was down from Progue's Point with his flute and Anna Cronan had her new melodeon. Jim played a *dhras* till he became tired and then Anna took up the music where Jim quit. There were three "full sets," an "orange and green," an "eight-hand reel," a "jig," a "hornpipe," and the "blackbird" by Jim Ahern.

You who have never seen Irish dances or have your impressions of them from travesties reproduced on the stage have no worthy concept of what Irish dances really are. You, whose imagination pictures noise, riotous laughter, the slamming of feet on mud floors and frantic leaping into air thick and foul with tobacco smoke—you will not understand the poise, the rhythm

and the grace. You whose concept of motion is limited to the monotonous waltz and its present-day imitations will probably not sympathize with the more complex, more artistic, and exquisitely refined dances the Celt has evolved and made part of his contribution to the poetry of the world. No wonder the dreamer, the lover of the long ago, looks back and sighs for them.

“Oh, the days of the Kerry dancing,
Oh, for the ring of the piper’s tune!”

Well, when there came a pause to the dancing, Jim Ahern called across to Mike’s Mikeen:

“Yeh, Mikeen, have you e’er a song you could give us?”

“Yerra, where would I get a song I’d like to know? An’ if I got one itself, I couldn’t get the tune.”

“Yeh, and why not?”

“Well, sure if I was to try to get the tune Father John would hear me where I’d be out in the garden, an’ he’d come down an’ chase me back to the river Deel to drown my voice.”

“Faith, Mikeen,” ventured Jim Donnelly, “he might be glad to know you could sing, so he’d sind you up to the gallery with the choir.”

Well, Mikeen could not be coaxed to sing, and neither could Tom Hackett, who had a “sore throath,” nor Jim Hogan who was “hoarse.” Several encouraging voices urged Anna Morgan but Anna was bashful. So were Kathleen Burns and Margaret Magee. It seemed as if every most promising star must vanish out of the firmament of song when Jack Clancy, the weaver down near Athery, stood up and said:

“If ye don’t mind, I’m thinkin’ of givin’ ye a stave or two myself.”

"That's talkin', Jack!" encouraged Mike Danahar. To say the truth about Jack Clancy, he was not one of the major prophets of song.

"He dhrawls a good dael," was Jim Donnelly's whispered comment.

"Yeh, he does indeed; an' he screeches kind o' when he goes up high like."

"Ay so. But he gets thim started anyhow, so 'tis aequal."

Well, Jack gave a few preliminary coughs for the purpose of clearing his throat, closed his eyes and, while swinging his head from side to side like a pendulum, sang:

"In Australia's far off shore
There is wealth for us in store
An' pearls an' sparklin' diamonds galore,
But if every grain o' sand
Was a diamond in that land,
I would still love dear old Ireland the more,
Boys the more!

I would still love dear old Ireland the more!"

"Bravo, Jack," cried Dick Fitz from across the room. "Courage, Jack, an' rise it!" called John Hartigan. "Yera, don't mind thim, Jack, but save your voice," Mike's Mikeen advised.

Jack had his own way and his own time. To tell the truth, there was many a stanza that seemed to serve as a fitting conclusion to the song, but Jack went on and on letting no one into the secret of just when he would finish; and when he did finish everybody was taken by surprise.

"By gor," whispered Mikeen to Jim Donnelly, while murmurs of approval were heard all around, "by gor, Jack's song reminds me of Father Mahoney of Lurragah

when he used to preach. He'd say, 'Now, my brethren, let us do this' an' 'let us do that,' an' thin you'd get ready to kneel down thinkin' he was finishin' up; but whin you'd be sure he was through intirely, he'd begin all over."

"You mustn't be talkin' about the priest, Mikeen," admonished Jim.

"Yeh, who's talkin' about the priest I'd like to know? By gor, a man can't open his mouth to yawn these times but they'll say he's talkin' agin his neighbor."

Other songs followed Jack Clancy's opening effort—songs of battle, songs of the hearth, songs of love and romance, songs of the homesick heart; then dancing again, and refreshments, and subdued conversation, and silent weeping in quiet nooks, and at last the sun rising rose-red above the horizon just north of Progue's Point.

The neighbors and friends leave the house and walk to Creelabeg station to await the end. Mary Madigan holds in her arms the little mother whom she may not see in this world any more; she kisses the rough brown face of her father many times; she kisses her brothers and her sisters whose faces are wet with tears. It is over at last, the sad leave-taking in the cool morning. Then Mary Madigan flings herself on the little couch below the window and sobs as if her heart must surely break. God help her, and God help all who must bid good-by to clustering shamrocks and to daisied earth! God help her and God help many others who look their last on Ireland when the Macgillicuddy Reeks vanish behind the haze!

As the kind God would have it, Father John himself took the train that morning at Creelabeg for Limerick.

The parting at the station is simple and reserved: hand-shakes, kisses, quiet tears. There is a waving of hand-kerchiefs, a lifting of hats, good-bys and Godspeeds as the train pulls away!

Father John and Mary occupied different "carriages" and did not meet till they stood on the platform of the Limerick terminal station. The time was brief there, for Mary's train was due to leave in a few moments.

"Have a brave heart, Mary," encouraged Father John, "and don't forget the people at home."

"I won't forget them, Father," said Mary through her tears.

"Don't be afraid. You are wise enough to keep near God. There's the signal, Mary. Good-by and God bless you always!"

"Father," said Mary, still crying softly, "God is very good to me. Your face is the last face I'll see that I know. I'll keep you not only in my memory, but in my heart as well."

Long after Mary's train had passed out of sight on its journey southward Father John lingered on the platform.

"Thirty years from now when she returns she'll be richer, more experienced. God grant she'll be only as good! I'll be under the earth then, and may be she'll stand above my grave and tell her Australian children the days of her young life long, long ago at Creelabeg, in the years of Father John."

XII

THE MARTYRS.

FATHER JOHN had the Irish priest's fondness for a horse. To want is to have with some men, and so not many moons rose white above Ballyadan before our priest owned as beautiful a black mare as you could meet anywhere along the road between Creelabeg and Shanagolden. She had a white star on her broad forehead and two hind legs as white from knee to hoof as a blossomed hedge.

"She's lovely," exclaimed Mikeen, shortly after Father John bought her from Maurice Condon when she was a three-year-old.

To tell the truth, Mikeen did not know any more about horse values than he did about architecture, but the rogue knew that gentle eulogy of his horse would please our dear priest. He was holding the mare by the bridle rein at the time, while Father John was making ready for a short ride toward Knockadare where the bog lands stretch their lonesome length toward the sea. The mare looked at Mikeen, sniffed his coat suspiciously and tossed her head grandly into the sunlight.

"Mikeen," she seemed to say, "'tis I know your palaver—just to please the priest!"

"Yerra, darlin', don't be hard on me," Mikeen whispered stroking her velvet neck. "Sure you're beautiful, an' I mane every word of it."

Then she placed her head on the bouchal's shoulder and they became as "great" with each other as any horse and man could be.

So you will understand now why Father John bought the three acres of upland hay just two fields below Ballyadan hills; you will see, too, why four tall men of the parish set to cutting the crop one glorious day in mid-June.

The memory of a hay-field in Ireland lives longer with a man than the memory of a love or a battle. On the vast acres of Texas or amid the apple-orchards of Oregon, anywhere, when the odor of cut hay comes to you, comes also the memory of home and morning dew and mellow sun and a lark rising of a sudden and child talk and the low laughter of men.

Well, the boys were cutting the hay: Jim Madigan, Tom Noonan, Dick Fitz and Martin Hogan. It would gladden your heart to watch their bent bodies swaying back and forth, as they went, one behind the other, in perfect time. It was a song without music. In grand opera they would call it the "Chorus of the Mowers," probably, only the opera chorus would cut imaginary hay with painted scythes.

Mikeen was especially deputed by Father John "to tend" the men as they worked. That is, he brought their dinner, hurried to the spring in the next field for fresh water or ran down to the headland for one or the other's pipe and tobacco. When not so employed, he walked slowly on the cut field beside the men, dodging the shaft of a remark and letting one fly in return.

About two in the afternoon, when the sun was the hottest, Jim Madigan observed:

"Mikeen, there's no luck at all if you cut a field o' hay an' not have a little bottle o' porther."

"But this is the priest's field," answered Mikeen, "an' the *pyshogues* have no power over him at all."

“ ‘Tisn’t Father John I’m manin’, but us.”

“Ay; but he’ll give ye his blessin’, so ‘twill be all aequal.”

“Yerra, but what about our drouth?” asked Hogan.

“Yeh, don’t mind that, man, any more than you mind the systhone in your belt. Don’t think of it at all; that’s what I do.”

“So that’s it, is it?” Hogan observed as he finished his swath. “But sure an’ a man must mind it whin he has a drouth,” he added as he walked leisurely back to begin anew.

“Yeh, but the spring wather is great, man, when you do be dry like.”

“Oh, faith ‘tis,” replied Jim Madigan, “ ‘specially whin you havn’t anything better.”

“An’ besides,” added Mikeen, “Father John is an out-an’-out timperance man entirely.”

“Yeh, sure we know that without your tellin’ us,” Dick Fitz remarked with obvious irritation.

“O’ course we do,” agreed Noonan; “but, by gor, his reverence could give the rest of us somethin’ even if he is timperance itself.”

“An’ he will too,” informed Mikeen cheerfully.

“Will he raelly give us somethin’, Mikeen?” Hogan asked with wide eyes.

“He will—as sure as the day, he will.” Mikeen spoke with finality.

“Are you manin’ ‘tis porther he’ll give us?” Tom Noonan stood up and looked at Mikeen.

“Yeh, no, I wasn’t thinkin’ o’ that.”

“Thin what was you thinkin’of?” Noonan began to call up before his imagination other beverages.

"Well, I was thinkin' may be 'tis the pledge he'd be givin' ye—the Father Matthew pledge."

"Wisha the devil mind you, Mikeen—God forgive me!—with your old gab an' prate!" Hogan exclaimed.

"Well, I'll ask him if ye say so."

"An' you do, you won't be worth thruppence whin we get done with you," said Dick Fitz menacingly

Just then Hogan saw Father John coming through the iron gate into the meadow.

"By gor, boys, here's the priest himself," he cautioned.

"Now is the time I'll tell him to give the pledge while ye're all here."

"Yerra, my God, Mikeen, don't! Sure if he thought we drank a drop he'd kill us. Besides, 'tisn't worth while for the likes of us, we take so little anyhow." Hogan had just finished when Father John broke in with the customary Irish salutation,

"God bless the work!"

"An' you too, Father John!" they all answered softly, as they lifted their hats.

Hogan looked at Mikeen appealingly but Mikeen's eyes were following a solitary crow that flew low toward the horizon.

"By gor, 'tis hot, Father John," observed Mikeen.

"Ay, but a mellowed and a tempered heat," Father John answered.

Mikeen did not get the soundings of "mellowed" and "tempered," but that made no difference.

"'Tis mellowed and timpered, as you say; but 'tis hot all the same, Father John, 'specially in the open."

"No doubt, for the land is dry."

"Ay' indeed, the land is dry, an' the min who work the land are dry, too."

Hogan's eyes shot furtive daggers at Mikeen.

Father John who understood Mikeen's drift appeared strangely dense.

"And yet our land is singularly blessed with moisture. The rains fall plentifully from the skies, the mists come generously from the bounteous sea, everywhere rivers glide down the mountains to the plains. Our people should not suffer from thirst."

The four men kept up their measured strokes but heard every word. Father John's language was somewhat confusing to Mikeen, though he would not make such an admission for a score of worlds.

"But, Father John, I tell you when a man is dry, he's dry."

"That's a truism."

"A thruism!" exclaimed Mikeen. "Yerra, you may well call it a thruism, Father John, an' two thruisms, an' three thruisms—when a man is dry enough."

Father John looked East toward Progue's Point to hide his laughter.

"Under a stream of cold, clear water, fire will smoulder and die," mused Father John still looking toward the East.

"Ay, 'twill indeed," agreed his man-of-all-work.

"And cool sparkling water will also put out the fire of thirst."

"Ay, in a way."

"Give me the man of our race"—and here our dear priest grew solemn as he always did when he stood in the presence of a great truth—"give me the man of our race who is not in the bondage of the thirst that kills and I will show you one who walks through fields of plenty."

“Mainin’ the drink?” asked Mikeen with that freedom begot of his position.

“Ay, the drink. I tell you, Mikeen, and I tell you, men; the greatest enemy of the Irish people is the man who preaches the apostolate of meet, mingle and drink.”

The four mowers stood up and listened.

“Men should know when to sthop,” ventured Mikeen.

“Men should, but in most cases they do not.”

“A little spirits lift up a people,” still pursued Mikeen.

“A spirited race doesn’t need spirits for uplift; God’s grace gives that,” answered Father John aphoristically.

Mikeen scratched his head and turned his eyes toward the horizon. Tim Hogan fingered the scythe-stone at his belt.

“By Gor,” ventured Hogan, “if a man would only know whin to lave it alone itself ‘twouldn’t be so bad entirely.”

“And what do you mean by that?” asked Father John, facing Hogan.

“Oh, I mane, Father John, that some min can take a drink or two an’ stop thin, an’ go home an’ be sober.”

“For the one that can, there are ten that can not. You’re making a rule out of the exception.”

“Faith, ‘twould be aequal so I’d be the exception,” said Mikeen in an aside to Dick Fitz.

Presently, Father John turned round and faced all four men. Then he asked softly, but with feeling:

“You four men would die for Ireland, if dying would save her?”

“We would, Father John, oh, by gor we would,” answered Hogan for himself and the others.

“And you would live for her too—live as clean, temperate men?”

"We would," answered the four with emotion.

"I knew you would. That's why I asked. And to show my confidence in you, I will give you a chance to live for Ireland by joining the Creelabeg branch of the Temperance league next Sunday after first Mass. Be there. God bless you!"

Father John walked South toward Ballyadan while the men stood speechless watching him as he passed along.

"By gor, we're ruined!" exclaimed Hogan.

"We are!" bemoaned Dick Fitz.

"An' we'll have to take it, too," mused Madigan.

"An' sure what's the use takin' the pledge whin we're sober already?" protested Noonan.

"Ah, but maybe he'll forget it by Sunday," Hogan said hopefully.

Dick Fitz looked at Hogan with apparent disgust.

"He will in me eye! You wait till Sunday an' see."

"Yeh, sure it's for ye're good anyhow, so its aequal," consoled Mikeen.

"Wisha the devil mind you, Mikeen! for 'tis you that caused all the trouble!" exclaimed Hogan with feeling.

"'Twas; by gor, 'twas," said Dick Fitz.

"Will we take it together or one by one?" asked Jim Madigan.

"Boys," said Hogan solemnly, "since we're goin' to die, let us die like min—one by one."

"Ay, like Allen, Larkin, an' O'Brien," Mikeen suggested. "An' after ye're dead like, I'll write a song about ye."

"Let us be, Mikeen. You didn't lave us alone whin we were livin'; at least let us be whin we're dead," Hogan admonished as he turned around to continue his toil.

XIII

THE GOING OF TOM CONNELLY

AH, then 'tis we that were lonesome the day Tom Connelly took passage for America in late September when all the woods were gold. Tom was as tall and as strong as Luga Laga, and as swift as Liath Macha, 'the Roan of the North.' For all, he spoke low and his ways were gentle. 'Twas small wonder we missed him and he the talk of the town, and the county beyond it for miles! He was captain of the hurdling team for two years running when Creelabeg won the west county championship. Ah, 'twas he could drive the ball down the side line toward the goal of the opponents, while the cheers of all Creelabeg drowned out the noise of the train coming up from Foynes. Once when the boys were playing a match against Kildimo, Tom broke his hurly while backing up a play when the ball was in mid-field. There were cries of "Yerra, get him a hurly!" "O by Gor we'll be baten this day if they don't find one this minit!" "Yeh, hurry up!" "Isn't there e'er a hurly around the place at all?" Whether it was fate or circumstance or what not, at any rate, there was no hurly forthcoming and Tom had to stand as helpless as an elephant on an ice-field while the battle surged around him. Father John, who watched the game, took in the disaster and dispatched a boy to his house to have the housekeeper get his ash hurly out of the brown trunk in his sleeping-room. 'Twas a memory of Blackrock. The boy returned with the memory; Tom ran out to the side line.

"Take it," said the priest, "'Tis the brand Excalibur."

"Ay," said Tom lifting his green cap by the peak as if he understood. 'Tis a way we Irish have of making ourselves at home in the sitting-rooms of art and learning.

"And keep it always," added the priest.

Tom's eyes grew large. "But sure if I break it, an' it the priest's!"

"'Twill be in battle I know, and that's honor." Tom was gone, his head in glory. The boys won that day. Many said it was because of Tom, who fought like Cuchulan must have fought in mid-river when the waters were red with the blood of battle. Tom said 'twas the priest's hurly. We cannot be sure.

Well, Tom left us for America, his head full of dreams, and his heart full of sorrow. His going made a void in the village just as if a big sod of turf were taken out of the side of a reek. You missed him Sunday morning at the nine o'clock Mass; you missed him at the funeral, and he with the broadest shoulder to carry the coffin; you missed him in the spring when the seaweed came; and oh, you missed him when the boys played the game, and he not there any more to call out, "Follow it up! Follow it up, boys!"

Tom was in America—out West. He got into the police force in a middle-sized town in the state of Ohio, which position he held with honor for four years. Everybody knew the tall Irishman who directed traffic at the crossing. He had a kind word here and a laugh and a "how-do-you-do, ma'am," there until he was known and loved by big and little.

Then, in the late winter, Tom got a cold which he didn't mind very much for he was strong and hearty. But it settled down in his lungs, and like a treacherous

serpent would not uncoil. He was taken from his boarding-house to the hospital and the Sisters' gentle fostering. So there he lay on the bed like an oak tree blown down by a gale back at Shanagolden. Yet so gentle was he, through all the fever and delirium, a child could lead him.

"What did the doctor say about me?" he asked Sister Mark one morning after she and the physician had conversed in low tones outside Tom's door.

"What did he say?" echoed the Sister in order to secure time to frame an answer.

"Ay!"

"He said you are as well as could be expected."

"As well as could be expected, is it?"

"Yes."

"Now, what's the use in talkin'. Sure I heard what he said, for all yer whisperin'."

"Well, what did he say then?" asked the nun amused.

"What did he say?" he echoed. "Well, he said, 'Tom will have a hard pull if he pulls through,' that's what he said." Which was literally correct.

The day before he died Tom grew very restless. Sister Mark sent for the priest who prepared the big policeman that was never to travel the beat any more. After the priest was gone Tom remained very quiet.

"You know," he said to the Sister between the painful reachings after breath, "Father Noonan, who just wint, is from my part at home. He gave me a thorough examination, an' I'm ready to go now, whatever 'tis."

Tom Connelly, large-limbed and big-hearted, the best hurler in Creelabeg, with a voice that was soft and a way that was gentle, died at eight o'clock in the morning, when a cold wind blew from the north. He was far

from home where the daisies shine star-like over the June fields, where the shamrocks lie hiding close to the breast of mother Ireland. But the same sweet Church—the Church of the tomorrow and the long ago—was beside him with her mystic administering, and the nuns—God bless them always!—were at hand to keep the Crucifix to his lips and his head lifted, so his eyes could be turned toward home.

Well, Tom's mother lived in a little house close to the boreen that ran beside the gardens and across the fields. And during all the sickness she waited and waited for the letter that did not come. Her heart was anxious; but the ship might be late, or his letter might have missed the mails by a day or,—well, there are so many reasons that come to one to explain away the unpleasant. But when the second week went by and the third, the patient mother grew anxious for her son.

Every morning she went out to the gate to meet Johnny Magee, the post-boy. Johnny came along with a song in his mouth like a bird of passage. But when he got within sight of Mrs. Connelly's gate, the song in him went down to his heart where it died away.

“Good mornin', Johnny!”

“Good mornin', Mrs. Connelly!” Then with a voice breaking for the pain that was catching her, she asked, “E'er a line from Tom?”

“Wisha, nothin' today, Mrs. Connelly, though tomorrow may bring us better news.”

“God grant it, Johnny; God grant it, an' it be His holy will!”

The days went—long, lonesome, monotonous days for the Irish mother whose love went off to a land she never saw. Ah, God help those Irish mothers who have sat

at their doors in the light of a million pale suns down all the wasting years from the beginning 'till now!

One day she met Father John back at Banagee bridge where he stood watching the river. It was a day of moods in mid March. The wind rose and fell in little gusts ; the tree limbs wailed as they swayed back and forth like mourning women at a wake ; caravans of gray clouds moving across the sky veiled the sun betimes and darkened the gliding waters. On either side the river, newly-made drills stood waiting for the potato planting, while here and there heaps of seaweed rose black above the red earth. It was a day for a man to croon about a sorrow, or to dream of happy days when life was in the morning.

"Well, Mrs. Connelly," said the priest when the woman reached him, "and how are you today?"

"I'm well, thank you, Father John, praise be to the good God! Although 'tis a long time now since I had a line from Tom."

"You don't tell me!"

"Yes, Father, 'tis now goin' on three weeks since I had a letter, an' he always regular at writin' every week."

"Perhaps he's sick, or maybe he has extra work to do?" suggested the priest.

"I don't know what 'tis, Father, only it makes me sad and sorry not to hear from him; an' I can't put him away from me, for he's in my thoughts by day, an' in my dreams by night."

"Ay so; but you mustn't let yourself break down thinking of him. No doubt he's well where he is."

"I hope so, Father; indeed I hope he is, whether 'tis livin' or dead he be. For if 'tis dead he is, O surely I want it to be well with him there."

Then the dear woman wept sweet, relieving tears, which the priest, who had a mother himself, did not try to restrain. When after a little, she slowly wiped her moist eyes with the handkerchief concealed beneath the gray shawl pinned at her breast, the priest said gently:

“Mrs. Connelly, the river below us that flows to the Shannon frees the land on either side from here to Castle-mahon of the water that soaks the red gardens and lies stagnant in the hollow places. And so sorrow would lie stagnant in the hollow places of our hearts if the good God did not give us the relieving river of tears.”

“Thim are good words, an’ God bless you, Father John,” the mother whispered as she kissed the hand out-reached to bless her.

Four days later when Johnny Magee came near Mrs. Connelly’s gate, he took a letter out of his brown bag.

“From the other side,” he said simply.

“Ay so; but not his,” Mrs. Connelly observed as she broke the seal. She handed the letter to the post-boy, her voice trembling.

“Read it, Johnny asthore; my heart is hurtin’ me.”

Johnny’s eyes ran down the double page. Then he looked at the woman.

“Yeh, let us hear it, Johnny bouchal! Whatever ‘tis, it can’t be worse than waitin’.”

“I can’t,” Johnny answered. “I haven’t the courage.”

“Ah, tell me quick, Johnny alanna. Sure, I promise to be brave whatever ‘tis.”

“Well,” said the post-boy huskily, “ ‘tis about him.”

“Tom?”

“Ay.”

“Tell me, dear, or I’ll die waitin’.”

"Well, Tom is gone, Mrs. Connelly. 'Twas the pneumonia did it, the letter says."

"Your manin' that Tom is dead?" the woman asked confusedly.

"Ay," the postboy answered sadly.

"Johnny, let me lean on your arm a minute, for I'm waek and the fields are runnin' around me."

Gently, as a nurse would, Magee helped the trembling mother to a little stone bench beside the gate. She rested for a few moments, and though Johnny's duties called him, he had not the heart to go.

"May be 'tis a drink of water would help you?" he suggested.

"No, Johnny, tisn't that. But it came so sudden, for all that I was fearin' it, an' he away among strangers, an' me not by the side of him whin he wint away."

"Sure 'tis aequal," consoled the postboy, "for he died in the hospital with the nuns takin' care of him. An' he had the priest an' everything just as if he was at home."

"Does the letter say that?"

"Ay, an' 'tis Mary Nolan wrote it—she that used to live back near the five-mile road."

"I remember Mary well, God bless an' keep her! But are you sure it says Tom had the priest?"

"Ay, the day before he died."

"Yeh, sure 'tis all aequal thin, as you say; an' Tom is better off. Thanks be to the good God who sint him the priest before he wint away! 'Twould be nice o' course if 'twas up at Creelabeg graveyard he was sleepin'. But an' 'tisn't, may the earth lie aisy on him, beyant where he is!"

XIV

KNOCKANARE BY THE SEA

IN EARLY April Father John took the morning train and went for a week's vacation thirty miles west to Knockanare. Why he took showery April rather than August, and why he selected Knockanare, a lonesome tract of bog land, rather than Kilkee, a summer resort on the Clare side of the Shannon, was beyond us entirely. But now after the reach of many years, when one understands our dear priest better, reasons are easy to find.

You see Father John was a lover of remote places where there was no path beaten from the march of men. That was why he chose Knockanare. Then, in April, sun and shadow, wind and shower follow one another with such unfailing consistency that Father John had what he was accustomed to call the "weather of moods."

Knockanare bogland begins on a rise of ground outside the village of Toomegara and inclines to the west. After descending for a mile it rises again in leisurely fashion. Then at the crest, the sea surprises one, half a mile away, blue and rolling and wonderful altogether. Knockanare, then, is like a saucer, with Toomegara, small and indistinguished at one rim, turf fields running up and down all slopes, and the great, brooding sea at the other.

It was eleven o'clock in the morning when Father John got off the train at Toomegara station and walked very leisurely down the silent street to Father Dan Dannaher's house. Father Dan was an elderly priest whom Father John had known years before when he answered Mass at St. Mary's, Limerick. Father Dan was only a young curate then; now he was a gray-haired, low-voiced parish priest

rich in humility. When you were near him, you thought of an ancient tree motionless in the still air of a summer day; and when you entered his house there stole upon you the memory of a quiet harbor into which winds and rolling thunder never came. Father John loved the dear priest whose day was in the twilight and the dim, early stars; and may be that was an added reason why he went to Knockanare in showery April for his week's rest.

Miss Kate Conway answered Father John's double knock on the black lion-headed knocker. Kate was called "Miss" for the reason that there is no other title that may be prefixed to the name of an unmarried lady of fifty-six.

"Wisha, an' welcome to you, Father John!"

"Thank you, Kate. How are you? How is Father Dan?"

"Fine, fine, thank you, Father. He's expectin' you. Father Dan!"

"Ay, ay. Come up, Father John," came a voice from above. The priest ascended the stairs.

"Well, Father John, and here you are at long last! Man, I've been waiting for you these weeks back."

"Father Dan, 'tis good to see you, to be near you, to hear your voice." He held the long, thin hand of the elderly priest between his own and looked affectionately at the dear old face.

At the one o'clock dinner, which was set in the room adjoining the small parlor, Kate displayed her best ware and the new silver set.

"Will you have a glass of wine, Father John?" asked Kate. She always asked him whenever he came just to show how little she regarded his teetotalism.

"No thank you," replied Father John with severity.

"'Tisn't good for the young," she said, placing a

bottle of inexpensive red wine on the table near Father Dan.

"Nor for women," retorted Father John.

"An' why, I'd like to know?" demanded Kate.

"They have the gift of tongues without it."

Kate had an answer ready, but she felt she had reached the boundary lines of discretion; so she disappeared into the kitchen.

"Tart, Father John!" ejaculated Father Dan as he sipped the wine.

"Where do you buy your wine?"

"I'm referring to your reply to the girl."

"Well, she spoke—'er—disparagingly of my teetotalism and naturally I had to seem acid."

"Faith, there's enough of that in the world, and too little of what the essayist calls the sweetness and light."

Father John made no reply; and, as so often happens when silence follows a mild rebuke, Father Dan felt regret for what he said.

"Forgive me, Father John, I'm old and crotchety. You musn't mind me."

"Father Dan"—and our dear priest took on the grand manner that always so became him—"you're right; you're altogether right. I was bitter when I should have been mellow; I was small and unworthy when I should have been large and forgiving."

Then seeing that the troubled look continued on the face of the elderly priest, he added:

"Never mind, never mind. 'Tis all over now and forgotten."

An hour after dinner Father John walked west on the road that fringed the bog fields toward the sea, while his host lingered in his little garden of lately-planted potatoes.

There was no glory of landscape on either side of the white road. Trenches out of which turf sods had been lately cut looked black and uninviting against the heather quickening to green; water, on the surface of which a green, slimy scum had gathered, lay still in every trench except for the little circles made by insects in the sparsely scattered clear spaces. Here and there men, women and children were at work cutting the dark, moist sods, and setting them out to dry. Cabins, in which lived the bog-men and their families, rose out of the barren land.

Father John walked leisurely, looking to the left and to the right. Sometimes he stopped and kept his eyes for a long time on those who labored. Many of the women were barefoot. It was pathetic to see them bending beneath the hampers of wet turf held in position on their backs by ropes of twine or hay. The little children, meek-faced and patient, whose world lay in the bog fields and malarial trenches, sent no ripple of laughter over the still air. And the men—their lot seemed as hopeless as if they were working out penal servitude in the bushes of Australia.

“Brilliant essayists and phrase-making orators call you the people of eternity,” said Father John aloud as he looked across the field toward the lowly toilers. “God knows you deserve to be! You have very little of the things of time!” he added bitterly.

A short distance on he met a little girl carrying a jug of water to some of those within the bog-fields. She was barefoot, but her hair was well combed and her face and hands clean. As she passed by she made a shy courtesy to the tall priest. The act touched him strangely.

“How are you, my little one?” he said very graciously as he paused in his walk.

“Well, thank you, Father.”

“Do you go to school?”

“O, yes, Father, to Miss Murphy over at Toomegara.”

“Miss Murphy? Who is she?”

“O, she’s the teacher that teaches us to sing in Irish an’ reads for us the stories ‘bout the Fenians an’ ‘bout Owen Roe!”

“Ay,” assented Father John, not wishing to interrupt this flow of information.

“An’, sure ‘twas she,”—the child continued, forgetting her timidity—“that gave me the story ‘bout ‘Rory of the Hill’.”

“I know that, child. Say it for me,” urged the priest.

And then in the soft language of the land, without the least overreaching of emphasis, the child delivered the stirring stanzas. There was enough of the fire of rebellion in the piece to make it a favorite with dear Father John.

“‘That rake up near the rafters”—the little girl pointed to an imaginary rake set under an imaginary roof—

“Why leave it there so long?
The handle of the best of ash
Is smooth and straight and strong;
And, mother, will you tell me,
Why did my father frown
When to make hay in summer time
I climbed to take it down?
She looked into her husband’s eyes
While her own with light did fill
‘You’ll shortly know the reason, boy!’
Said Rory of the Hill.”

You must imagine it all: the little girl with the soft, sweet brogue; the tall priest, half dreamer, half rebel, idealist and poet; the white road stretching across the dark peat fields to the horizon; the gray clouds sailing to eastward, and the faint rumble of the sea. It was like old wine to the heart of the priest, it stirred him so. And how his brain leaped when the little one cried out in childish treble!

She looked at him with woman's pride,
 With pride and woman's fears;
 She flew to him, she clung to him,
 And dried away her tears;
 He feels her pulse beat truly
 While her arms around him twine—
 'Now God be praised for your stout heart,
 Brave little wife of mine.'
 He swung his first-born in the air
 While with joy his heart did fill.
 'You'll be a freeman yet my boy,'
 Said Rory of the Hill."

When she recited the final stanza Father John joined with her:

"O Knowledge is a wondrous power,
 And stronger than the wind;
 And thrones shall fall and despots bow
 Before the might of mind,"

and so on, as of course you know, about the power of poet and orator and the vain hope that "Wolf Tone were here today." When it was all over Father John placed

a piece of silver in the child's hand. She raised her black eyes to the great, good face and said ever so softly, "Father, sure I spoke it for you."

"I know, child, but you'll take it anyhow as a keepsake."

The next moment he was continuing his journey along the sloping road, stopping here and there to look back at the turf cutters. Then from the hill's crest, about a mile out, he beheld the sea. The breeze that came to him was fresh and cool and altogether different from the hot, heavy air of the bogs he had just left.

There is that about the sea which awakens the wild longing in all of us. Amid the heat of a smoky city we dream of it; far inland, with flat plains all around us, we hope it will gladden our vision beyond the horizon. From whatever shore we come upon it, our hearts are lifted, as if we looked, after weary years of absence, at the blue smoke of the home chimney.

Father John took off his hat like he would do going into the chapel. The sough of the surf came to him in deep, prolonged notes. He walked to the northwest, climbed a rush-covered knoll to get a better view. An old bogman, his eyes toward the sea, smoked leisurely in among the rushes. He put away his pipe and lifted his hat when the priest approached.

"Tis a calm sea today," observed Father John.

"Ay, 'tis so. But she can be rough when the mood is on her."

"I make no doubt. You have big storms I suppose."

"We do, Father, we do indeed. There be times whin they make the strongest of us affeerd," answered the bogman solemnly.

“ ‘Tis a lonesome stretch,” observed the priest looking up and down the coast line.

“Ay.”

Above the rushes rose a plain stone block that arrested the quick eye of the priest.

“What is this for?” he asked.

“It marks a grave,” answered the bogman.

“A grave?”

“Ay. Nora o’ Nora’s Cross.”

“Nora of Nora’s Cross? Who is she?”

“Well,” said the old bogman, “ ‘tis a bit of a story. Father, an’ if you have the time, an’ care to walk a little bit, I’ll tell you; for, your reverence, whin I sit awhile the rheumatism come back at me.” The priest and the bogman went leisurely to the northwest nearer the sea.

“Well, Nora Downey lived at a cross in the road a half mile east o’ Toomegara. For many years they called the place Nora’s Cross,” began the old bogman in a leisurely way. “Nora was a kind of a quare girl who never married an’ never wint around to see the neighbors at all at all. Every day ‘bout three o’clock she used to walk hether the road you came an’ sit up on the hill we left, lookin’ out at the say. An’ this she did every day for many a long year. An’ if you’d meet her and say to her, ‘Yeh, Nora, what for do you stand out there long hours watchin’ the say?’ she’d answer,

“To hear the voices.”

“What voices?” you’d ask.

“The voices of all the min an’ womin’ of Ireland who lie under the say. The voices of all o’ thim that left country an’ kin an’ never saw the land o’ their draems. ‘Tis their voices I hear cryin’ “Ochone, ochone” for the brown earth, an’ the white daisies of Ireland.”

"Thin one day a gale blew round the point from Kerry Head an' the say rushed up upon the land. 'They are callin' louder than ever for the brown earth an' the white daisies', Nora o' Nora's Cross cried whin the great waves came rollin' in. Thin all at once she left the hill back there an' ran down against the wind to the brink o' the say. She lifted her two hands up to heaven an' cried out louder than the wind, 'They're callin' for the white daisies and the brown earth! The brown earth and the white daisies!' Her long black hair flew back with the wind, her white hands were lifted to the sky. 'The brown earth,' she cried again, 'they're callin' for an' the white daisies! The white daisies, the brown earth—an' me!' Then a strange notion took her and she plunged into the say. She rose and fell with the waves for a while, all the time cryin' about the brown earth an' the white daisies, an' the lost ones below the wathers. Thin she wint under an' rose no more.

"They found her three days after an' buried her over in Tur-na-Greega graveyard below an ould fir tree. But after she was buried the coffin was ruz above the ground next mornin'. They buried her the same day but again it ruz the mornin' after, an' so on for seven days. Then Shemus Duggan says to them all: 'Tis calling for the say she is, an' she'll never rest till ye take her there.' Well, by gor, they were said by Shemus, an' took back the coffin in the early mornin' an' buried Nora up there on the hill by the say. An' she never ruz from that day to this."

"When did all this happen?" asked Father John.

"Oh, years an' years ago, before your reverence, or me aether, was born."

"But who saw this—this"—he was going to say "prodigy", but he changed his mind and said—"wonder?"

"Yeh, everybody round about at the time."

"And where are they all?"

"Yeh, sure they're dead an' gone this long time."

"Well, then, couldn't one dig up the bones an' be sure if one is really buried there.?"

"Yeh, no one would do that, your reverence, because 'tis glad enough they were that Nora stayed down whin she did, let alone tryin' to make her rise again."

The day had gone by when Father John walked back over the bog road to dear Father Dannaher's. The moon shone in the blue spaces between the motionless gray clouds; the stars were out and the time was very still. As he went, Father John mused:

"A race that can fashion a story out of a block of stone standing yonder on the hill's crest will always have certain great names in the literature of the world. Their fancies will never starve for a theme. The black peat of the bog-field, the brown dust of the winding road will set them to seeing. This race has filled the treasure vaults of poetry with a million dreams."

Dear Father John! His rare mind would always seek the peaks where men see visions, but for all his heart stayed on the plains with the people.

XV

THE LEAGUE HOUSE

THE road passing north of Progue's Point runs straight west until it climbs a hill and disappears.

From Trout Stream below the Point, where it begins, until it vanishes beyond the rise of ground, the road does not swerve to left or to right by the fraction of a foot. Everybody around Creelabeg used to call this highway the "Long Road" in those dear days. It was a sort of mystery road, due in part to the many tales people told about it; in part, too, to its reaching so far away to where it disappeared behind the hill.

Many is the clear day the children coming back from school stood on the little bridge—Trout Bridge we called it—spanning Trout Stream, and looked over the straight road to the west. A donkey with his creel of turf, a few heifers driven to the fair by a farmer's lad, a side-car drawn by a white nag, a solitary peddler bent and travel-stained, a huxter woman, a country doctor sitting solitary and conscious of his importance in his black-painted gig—these and all manner of others went back and forth the Long Road from sun to dusk like birds of passage.

How often, about ten o'clock in the morning, Father John walked across Progue's Point to the bridge for a long look to the west! You could see him there of warm July days leaning sideways on the little battlement gazing into the far-off vista. We never knew the dear man fully, he was so beyond us in his thought and feeling; yet somehow, it appeared to us he was lonesome, the way he waited

and watched at the bridge. Maybe thought made him sad, thereby illustrating what Mr. Keats has sung,

“When but to think is to be full of sorrow.”

Well, one mid-summer morning in late July or early August, Father John walked leisurely back the Long Road toward the rise of ground in the west. Jim Clancy, driving his gray mare harnessed to a car newly painted, overtook the priest about midway on the stretch of road. He put his timber pipe into his coat pocket just before he reached Father John. As he passed, the priest stopped him.

“A warm day, Jim.”

“Ay, 'tis, Father John; ay, 'tis.”

“And good for the crops.”

“Ay,—'specially the late hay. It needs the drouth now.”

“Your mare carries herself well, Jim. But I mustn't be keeping you. The market will be well on before you get to town.”

“Faix thin, Father, an' 'tisn't to the market I'm goin' at all, but back to Glen.”

“To Glen? Why, Jim, that's a good twenty miles.”

“'Tis. But thin I won't be back till tomorrow. To tell the truth, Father,” said Jim confidentially, “I'm goin' to the big meetin' to help thim to bring the 'League House' to the McCabes o' Curragh.”

“‘The League House’ to the McCabes of Curragh,” repeated the mystified Father John.

“Ah, thin, you haven't heard,” said Jim comprehendingly. “You see, Father, the McCabes o' Curragh were put out o' their farm by Darcy, the landlord, two weeks ago ere yesterday. Well, they've been livin' about among the neighbors ever since.”

"I have heard of the McCabes' eviction—they live in Stonehall parish. But what has that to do with your going to Glen?" questioned the priest.

"Well, you see, Father John, they have a timber house back there at Glen which the Land League put up for an evicted tinent two years ago. A settlement was made last spring, the tinent was put back on his farm, an' the League House they put up for him is idle. So 'tis back to Glen we're goin' for it, an' the McCabes o' Stonehall will have a home for themselves."

"I see, I see. You'll return this road?"

"Ay, Father John, in a procession an' with three bands."

"Good day, Jim; I'll watch for the return," said Father John abruptly.

Jim lifted his hat and drove on.

It was four o'clock the next afternoon when the procession of sixty-five vehicles of all kinds came east over the Long Road bearing sections of the wooden building. The active bearers were eight in number: fifty-seven were honorary in character, lending their moral support, as it were, by adding to the length and importance of the procession.

To tell the truth, the different sections of the much-mentioned League House which were borne on the horse carts would not quicken you to admiration. They were unpainted, and therefore spoiled by sun and rain. Here and there a joist was broken, an upright split, a board missing; rusty nails stuck out loose, like teeth in the mouth of a skeleton.

Father John, with Mike Sheahen, Tim Condon and a few more young men of the parish went down to Trout Bridge to watch the passing of the long procession. Ardee

brass band played a few bars of "Wearin' o' the Green" from a position of honor in Normoyle's "long car" that was hired especially for the great day by the Ardee branch of the Land League. There was a brief halt, out of consideration for Father John probably, during which the priest ran his eyes along the eight cars which were honored with sections of the building. Presently the procession moved leisurely like a deep river going out to sea. Father John stopped Tim Donovan of Kilmeedy, the driver of the last car, which was occupied by four other men. Kilmeedy was somewhat remote from Creel-abeg, so Tim was not included in Father John's circle of acquaintances.

"'Tis a big affair this," said the priest.

"'Tis, thin, your reverence. The min o' the country turned out well," assured the Kilmeedy man.

"You have enough horses and cars and men to carry the temple of Solomon."

Tim did not penetrate the Biblical reference, so his answer was non-committal.

"Faith, I'll engage the same is true for your reverence."

"But I notice you have only eight horses bearing the burden."

"Well, your reverence, we wanted to have it like a grand dinner intirely—with lots o' laevin's."

"Yes," answered Father John, in that quiet way we all so enjoyed, "but the laevins' are larger than the dinner."

"That's our way o' bein' big in this country, your reverence. Plenty for all."

"Quite so. A multiplication of the loaves, as it were."

"Ay; or puttin' butter on two sides o' the bread an' sugar on one," grinned Jim.

Father John dropped figure and took up fact.

"Don't you think, my dear man, 'tis a great waste bringing this wreckage of lumber all the way from the west: a waste of time, a waste of money, and a waste of labor? Here you have spent two days, more or less, on this fantastic trip; you have been away from your fields and your gardens; your horses are tired and yourselves are tired too. And all—for what? To bring back with you a few odd dozen pieces of lumber and scantling that never can be reconstructed into a house fit for man or beast. Didn't the thought come to any one that all of you, by getting together and giving as much as you honestly were able, could have built a little house that would cost a bit more in money, perhaps, but would be worth the giving when you were done with it?"

"Wisha no, thin, your reverence, the same thing was never mintioned among us. You see most o' the min thought 'twould be a grand thing to have a long drive across the country with great cheerin' an' a couple o' bands playin'."

"Yes, but that poor family down at Stonehall," insisted the priest, "would have a house to live in if you went about the thing with some sort of plan."

"O, but your reverence, they'd be no bands thin an' no cheerin' an' no glory."

"Perhaps not. But a brass band and shouting do not keep out the autumn rains and the frosts of winter."

"That's all true, your reverence. But 'tis a powerful good thing to let the inemies o' the counthry know we're alive."

"Quite so, even if your friends in Stonehall die from cold." Dear Father John, he could send home a hard truth sometimes! He looked at the driver for a moment in silence, then said without a trace of bitterness:

"Good day, my man. You had best catch up with the procession. You have brave hearts, anyhow." Then he walked across the large field through which Trout Stream ran till he reached Progue's Point. "Brave hearts, indeed," he mused, as if completing his thought. "Would to God there was one wise head to direct them."

Seven months later Father John was driving through the district of Stonehall on his way home from Limerick. It was in the afternoon and the sky was grey. On the right side of the road stood two circular stone piers from each of which swung an iron gate. Intermittent gusts of wind shook the ivy that was knotted close around the piers. On the left side a large field of furz stretched north to the horizon. In a cleared space in the middle of this field a roofless wooden house stood out forlorn against a sombre horizon. The furz bushes rose and fell in little, irregular waves like a choppy sea. Three workmen were scraping the soft white upper surface of the road to one of the grassy sides. Father John told his hired jarvey driver to stop when they reached the nearest of the workmen.

"That house in the middle of the field, what is it?" asked Father John, without any introduction.

"Yeh, that's the League House, your reverence."

"Is that the house they brought from Glen some months ago?"

"'Tis, your reverence; O faix 'tis."

"For an evicted family?"

"Ay, your reverence, the McCabes o' Curragh."

"And do they live in it?"

"Wisha no thin, they don't. Whin 'twas brought hether from the west they built it up like, an' that same night a big wind came by way of Tarbert an' tumbled the roof off it entirely. Then it rained two days runnin' an' when it stopped rainin' the carpenters had a deal o' work to do, an' four weeks wint by an' not a hap'orth was done to the house. Thin two daughters o' the McCabes who were out in America sint passage money to the whole family an' before the carpenters made up their mind to put the roof on again, the McCabes were all in America, and so they didn't make up their minds at all."

"And no doubt they won't in the future?" Father smiled ever so quietly.

"Hardly, your reverence," answered the road-man confidentially. "You see some other poor evicted tinnint may need it elsewhere, an' by the time the roof would be on they'd have to be takin' it off again, maybe."

"I'm afraid the house won't stand many more journeys of triumph. It looks as if the day of dissolution were near," ventured Father John with concealed irony.

"'Tis the truth, your reverence. But an' all the same if it don't fall to pieces intirely we'll give it a couple o' more rides."

"What is the use? No one can live in it with human comfort."

"They'll be marchin' an' glory anyhow, so 'tis aequal," answered the roadman with as much finality as if he were answerin' a question in the catechism.

"Good day, my man," said the priest after bidding the jarvey driver to move on.

"We are a strange race," he mused as he was driven over the wet country road. "We build railroads and direct the manevring of fleets; we thrill Parliaments and watch the corn-exchange. We are orators, politicians, men of enterprise and affairs. And for all that we are as supremely foolish and impractical as any race in the history of the world. We have helped to build and to rule cities, and still we can descend to the quixotism of carting a collection of rotten boards from one end of the country to the other. We would be hopeless, only I think those rascals see the humor of it. Yes, the rogues like change and travel and excitement. That show house gives them an excuse for a free day—far from the sweat and dust of garden and hay-field. Our sense of drollery saves us."

XVI

THE BRAVE DESERVES THE FAIR.

MIKE CONDON came down from Cork to superintend the frieze-workers in the Newbridge Woolen Mills. If you went straight west from Creel-abeg over Grageen road, not turning north toward Athery nor south toward Ardee at Grageen cross, you would meet, some distance on, a bridge that crosses the Deel in four spans. Beyond the bridge the mill buildings stand in from the road. We used to think it a great thing in those days to go to Newbridge with our parents when they carried back so many pounds of wool and received so many yards of tweed or frieze in return. How those buildings, four stories high, towered above us! And how we wondered what would happen to the world if they ever fell! How from afar, with wide eyes and throbbing hearts we watched the great, primitive mill-wheel going round and round in lazy revolutions! How sinister it looked as it churned the waters into foam that lingered upon the blue surface, like a passion still unspent, far down the river! Then, too, the solemn booming of wheels and cylinders and the swift, mysterious movements of carding and weaving machines wrought up our imaginations to wonderment.

Well, Mike Condon was an expert in the art of making frieze; and that is why he came all the way from Cork to oversee the frieze workers at a salary of three pounds a week. There was a school-house about five lengths of a telegraph pole west of Gragreen cross, and half-way between that and Newbridge a police-barracks

at a place called "Hill Corner." It was so named because there was no hill there, and no corner either.

Kate Collins came over from Newbridge to teach school at Gragreen and, after the children were gone, went back home in the evening. She was a grand girl, twenty-one, with eyes the color of the river Deel just below Athery where it joins the Shannon. She had a good schooling, was gentle-mannered and carried her fortune in her smile. I must not praise her too much, however, lest I seem partial to one from my side of the county. And yet, if you met her as she went along nodding to some old woman rinsing the milk pans, you would surely stop and look at her again.

Well, there was a policeman back at "Hill Corner" who had taken a fancy to the girl, and in the course of time they became "great" with each other, as we say at home. He was a smooth, finished man, this Mr. James Roe of her Majesty's police, who could smile graciously. Often as he walked over the Gragreen road he met Miss Kate, and begged permission to go a piece of the way with her in order to carry her class books. Sometimes he sent her a little basket of choice fruits by one of the children, or maybe he bought her a present for Christmas that was a wonder for all eyes.

"Wisha, 'tis a pity that Kate Collins thinks about the peeler whin there are so many others," Mrs. Donnelly made observation while on her way to the market.

"'Tis," agreed Mrs. Hartigan; "an' if she'd only turn her head aside a little, she'd find lots of others a great dael better."

"Daecenter at any rate," said Mrs. Hartigan somewhat bitterly.

So the talk went around among the neighbors about the great pity it was that Kate Collins, the grandest girl from Adare to Shanagolden, should care a ha'pworth about a man in the government's service. As for Kate herself, she did not seem to mind at all one way or another. Sometimes you would think she had all but given her promise to marry him, the way people talked; but, as so often happens, it proved to be the mere chaff of rumor.

As everybody knew, Father John was an out-and-out Nationalist. He was as polite as a gentleman should be with the hired servants of a foreign government, but he never mingled with them socially. Now when our dear priest saw from the straw of friendship how the wind was blowing his heart was heavy. Yet what could he do? He could not very well say, "Now, Miss Kate, you must give up Mr. James Roe," because there was nothing in the catechism against a girl marrying a policeman. It was purely a question of racial tradition, and one could not be insistent on that.

One afternoon late in January, Father John met Miss Kate beyond Gragreen on her way home from school. It was a typical mid-winter day in West Limerick. The Banshee wailed among the naked tree limbs and dark clouds raced across the sky.

"'Tis a moody day, Kate," said Father John, his great coat buttoned to the collar.

"Yes, indeed, Father. But 'tis pleasanter than snow or rain."

"Ay, so it is." As a matter of fact, Father John was not interested at all in the weather.

"Kate," he said, "there is a little matter I want to talk about, so I'll go back a bit toward Newbridge with

you." They went for some moments in silence, and Father John resumed:

"Now, Kate, this is what I want you to do for me. A number of our women formed a club two weeks ago for the purpose of making clothes for the poor of the district. Just now they are scurrying around for help wherever they can find it—Catholic or Protestant, Pagan or Jew. I myself am looking for the brightest and handsomest girls to lend a hand in the good work."

"Yes, but Father," said Kate without the sign of a smile, ("you preached from the altar two weeks ago Sunday that flattery is as treacherous for Christians as bait is for the fish."

"Quite so, but I never thought about the needs of the Woman's Club when I said that," answered Father John equally solemn.

"So, I suppose by flattering my vanity you hope to win me."

"Ay."

"Then you flatter me and tell me you flatter me, which is no flattery at all."

"The very thing," answered Father John, mildly triumphant. "What I said in the sermon was all right, and what I say to you is all right. So, of course, you'll do what I ask like always."

"Indeed I will, Father John, flattery or no flattery. Especially since 'tis for the poor."

"Now I want you to call at Newbridge on your way home and ask the superintendent for a donation of tweed for the women. Smile your best when you see him, so he'll give generously. I know you will. Thank you. God bless you!"

On Saturday morning Kate went to the mill. The

day of "moods" which Father John referred to earlier in the week was transformed into a day of crisp frost and faraway blue skies. She entered the mill office and sat in the chair to which one of the clerks motioned her. Another clerk disappeared through one of the side doors in search of the superintendent. After a wait of some minutes a tall man entered the office and stood before the school-teacher. Kate rose.

"You wish to see me?" he asked. The girl noticed from her one swift glance that the man who stood before her was tall and dark-haired, with a face eager and intelligent.

"Yes, I—I want to see the superintendent."

"I'm the superintendent."

"I am Miss Collins and am come to you on an errand. You see, Mr. ____"

"Condon," Mike informed her.

"You see, Mr. Condon, Father John has organized the women of the parish into a society for helping the poor with food and clothing. Of course a work of this kind needs sympathy and help on all sides, if it is to do half what's expected of it. Certain parts of the district have been assigned to different persons to solicit money, clothing or whatever they can get from the well-disposed. I have been appointed to Newbridge, and so I am here this morning in the hope that you may be able to do something for me."

"You put it all very nicely, Miss Condon; but I'd like to know just what you expect from us—money or clothes?"

"We take whatever we get, Mr. Condon. But since you're good enough to allow me to choose, I suggest the company donate some tweed."

"Very good, Miss Collins. I'm sure the manager will be delighted. Just a moment." Mike was gone one minute and back the next.

"Come this way and make your selection."

In the stock room Mike tried his best to please.

"Now this is a piece of goods which you will find wears very well."

"Yes, and the color seems so suitable, too," commented Kate, eyeing the sample critically. "Yes, I think 'tis just what we want."

Forthwith, Mike measured off a generous portion, had one of his aids fold and wrap it, and now it was all ready for the critical Miss Kate. The bundle was very large for a lone girl to carry, so Mike took it for her. On the way to Kate's home, they talked about trivial things—teaching, how Mike liked Newbridge, the cold which Kate's mother contracted two weeks before and what trouble she had getting rid of it. It was all about so little, yet it all meant so much. The girl was happy when she said "Good-morning" at the threshold of her own home.

"Won't you come in for a moment?"

"I'd better not this morning, Miss Collins. You see I've just escaped for a few minutes."

"Well, some other time then. I'll let you know what Father John thinks of your tweed."

"Indeed, I'll be glad, Miss Collins, and thank you." Mike went away with a heart uplifted.

It's a long way to follow the course of true love, so winding and so strange a path it goes. Mike Condon visited Miss Kate the next Sunday, advised her mother about the best kind of a shawl to wear as a protection against the winter cold. He took her to the Tralee

races, to the hurling matches at Newcastle, to the regatta at Foynes, to Limerick for the Autumn *Feis*.

“By gor, the peeler is out in the yard intirely!” observed Johnny Mangan when a few of the boys were fishing back at the Deel one Sunday afternoon.

“Devil skhurt to him!” answered Dick Fitz as he smoked quietly.

“Twill be a match, man!” Johnny added after he had secured a light from Dick. There was a silence of some minutes and then Tom Sheahan made observation:

“Ay, you can’t tell, Johnny; you can’t tell. Sometimes they go together awhile an’ then they laeve off; an’ thin, again, sometimes, they don’t.”

“Yeh, Miss Kate, have you given up the peeler?” asked Mike’s Mikeen as he met the school teacher near the chapel gate. Kate tilted her head grandly and flung back,

“How dare you!”

“Yerra, you needn’t get mad, morrayha! Sure we all know ’tis dyin’ about you he is.”

“ ’Tis over in the priest’s garden you ought to be hoeing the carrots,” admonished Kate.

“Wisha, Kate, I’ll have carrots enough to hoe whin I raech the garden o’ Paradise, please God!”

“Faith, at the rate you’re going, Mikeen, you’ll never get there. ’Tis working for Father John you should be, and not gadding round here.”

“Yeh, sure Father John knows I’m inclined to over-work myself by nature, an’ so he don’t mind at all if I rest a dhras.”

* * * *

Dear Father John! He hoped against every odd that Mike would be successful in winning the hand and

heart of Miss Kate. One day he met the superintendent and said to him:

"I suppose you and a certain young lady will come in to see me soon."

"I don't know, Father," laughed Mike. "You see it takes courage to ask when you expect 'no' for an answer."

"Only the brave deserve the fair," quoted the priest.

"Faith, I'll be brave if 'tis any use," answered Mike.

When the priest met Kate six weeks later, he said:

"Miss Kate, that Mike Condon is a grand young man. I hope he wins the girl that's worthy of him."

"'Tis so grand he is," said Kate, "I'm afraid there'll be none at all worthy of him!" Her palaver did not escape Father John.

"I don't mean he is a demi-god, of course; but I think he's a man any girl should be proud of. Besides, he is one of our own, out-and-out of the people."

"O he's all that you say, I'm sure, Father."

"Then what's the matter with you? Why don't you encourage the young man?"

"Does he need encouragement? Is that why you told him that 'Only the brave deserve the fair'?"

"Did he tell you that?"

Kate laughed quietly.

One Wednesday in mid-March, Mr. James Roe of her Majesty's police received word of his transfer from Hill Corner to Banagar. He was to leave the following Saturday.

"I'll engage he'll ask her before he goes," commented Johnny Mangan.

"You're maenin' the peeler will ask Miss Kate?"
Mike Sheahan asked.

"Ay."

Johnny was right; Mr. James Roe proposed.

Kate listened to Roe's little address and then answered with the sweetest smile:

"I cannot consider your proposal at all, Mr. Roe. You will understand why when I tell you I'm already engaged."

When Mr. James Roe left Saturday, Father John was delighted.

"So you didn't go with Mr. Roe, the policeman, after all," he observed to her a few days afterwards.

"How could I," laughed Kate, "and I already engaged."

"Indeed! To Mike Condon?"

"Yes, the 'Brave deserve the fair,' man."

"Deo Gratias," answered Father John, like the clerk when answering Mass.

XVII

THE CONCERT.

IMUST tell you about the concert Father John arranged for all the people of the parish shortly after Christmas. First of all, of course, there were those preliminary murmurings of dissent, those little quiet ironies that are the peculiar weapons of the Irish.

“Wisha, faith, ‘tis little good concerts will do the likes of us.”

“‘Deed thin, ‘tis better off we’d be at home in our beds, not listenin’ to their singin’ all night.”

“By gor, ‘tis goin’ to Dublin we’ll be by an’ by to hear the singers from foreign parts.”

All the same, preparations and rehearsals went on with enthusiasm. Jim Condon, the carpenter, enlarged the stage of the school hall and fixed the floor in a few places; Mrs. Sullivan washed the windows, and a number of the girls of the parish evolved and executed a scheme of decoration.

The rehearsals were carried on in gloomy secrecy. You heard plaintive notes of a violin or bird-like rhapsodies of a piccolo through the locked doors and windows of a large room over Keegans’ drapery. Children went in noiselessly during the early evening and returned an hour later. If you were of a curious turn and stopped to inquire of them what were the “doings” they would smile sweetly and pass on.

“What are you goin’ to have for the concert?” Jack Walsh inquired of Jim Donnelly back at the forge. Jim had a part in the program.

"There's no knowin' at all, man!"

"Yerra you needn't be so sacret about it!" said Jack sarcastically.

"Yeh, but sure if 'twasn't a sacret 'twould be no good at all."

"An' why wouldn't it, I'd like to know?"

"Because you want to be surprised, man; just like whin you get maet for your dinner and don't expect it."

On the night of the concert the wind came cold from the mouth of the Shannon to the northwest. The clouds fled over the face of the sky and the moon shone fitfully. The school hall was brim full of people when the time came for the opening of the program. After the curtain went up, thirty little girls shone white from the stage on the darkened hall.

"By gor, who are they?" asked Dick Fitz of Johnny Mangan in a whisper.

"Childer," Johnny answered without turning his head.

"Yeh, sure I know that, but arn't they strangers?"

"'Deed thin they aren't. There's Maggie Stokes, an' Kittie Kelly, an' Nora Cronin in the first row there in front o' you."

"You don't say! By gor, I would never know thim."

A fifteen year old miss at the piano runs her fingers along the keys with the abandon of one of the Renowned, bounds back to earth and signals the chorus to begin. The young voices send this invitation to the Creelabeg listeners:

"Come away into the night
The stars are shining!
See, the moon in her far height
Is gracefully reclining!
Come away! Come away!"

The stars are shining,
 The white moon reclining.
 Come! Come! O come away!
 O come away!
 O come away!"

It was a sweet, airy piece that ran to the extent of three stanzas and then died away with a much drawn-out note of farewell. The people applauded heartily for the children looked ever so pretty in their white dresses, every head crowned with a rose.

Jim Donnelly came later on to offer his flute solo. "Wisha, look at the bow he makes to us!" Mary McCabe whispered to her friend Kittie Hannon.

Jim was not supreme in the art of his instrument. He had not the manner of the master, the poise that is half in-born, half learned, and he had a ludicrous way of closing his eyes, swinging his body from side to side and keeping time with his foot. In addition his breathing was noticeably loud.

"B' dad he's like a broken-winded horse," Ned Donovan made observation while Jim perspired over his rendition of the "Blackbird."

"Yeh, don't mind him, man; he's doin' the best he can," answered Jack Madigan.

"He is, he is indeed; but his best is bad, by gor. He's getting so red he'll kill himself."

"Yeh, that'll do now. D'ye lave him alone," cautioned Jack.

Mary Clancy came out with her violin. She received an ovation that continued while she tuned her instrument. I must tell you about Mary and why she was the best-liked girl in all Creelabeg.

After finishing her schooling, Mary took up dress-making at Liskara—a small town five miles east of Limerick. She was there about two years when she met a young man named John Lynch who drove the mail-car from Limerick City on east through Liskara. Mary was an attractive girl, and by and by the two fell in love. The young man proposed. Mary wrote home to ask her mother's advice. Mrs. Clancy wrote back and advised Mary to have the young man come out and visit with the family some Sunday. Well, John Lynch went out and pleased everybody beyond the telling. So it was arranged that they be married by Father John the last Tuesday but one before Lent at the eight o'clock Mass. Those preparations of millinery and dressmaking were hurried along for the event as if the gates of heaven might close before they were finished. Margaret Crimmins was to act as bridesmaid and a strange man from County Meath—Lynch was a Meath man—was to stand beside the groom. Then came the news that Lynch was the son of an emergency man who did every kind of henchman service for a bad landlord in County Meath. The information was searched into and found to be true. Lynch had concealed his father's ugly calling and the unforgettable taint upon himself.

“ ‘Twill be hard on Mary,” Mrs. Hayes observed to Mrs. Sheahan when the news seeped through.

“ ‘Twill, poor girl! An’ I’m wonderin’ if she’ll give him up.”

“ An’ I’m wonderin’ too. Like as not she won’t.”

“ An’ he the son of a ‘mergency man! An’ she the child o’ decent people!” Mrs. Sheahan was horrified.

Mary Clancy herself said never a word to anybody, until two days before the wedding. Then she called at

the parish house to see Father John. The priest met her in the parlor. It was dark in the room for the sky was overcast and sullen. Father John looked kindly at the girl and waited. He was a great priest always, but never so great as when he dealt with the heart-broken.

"Father," said Mary ever so softly, "I came to speak to you about it."

"I understand," he answered and so spared her the pain of recital.

"And now, Father, I'm come to you for advice. Am I to break the engagement?"

"That's for you to say, child."

"I love him, Father, and I've promised him, and 'tis hard now to turn back."

"Ay."

"And he has always been honorable and kind."

"True, very true, indeed," answered Father John, who, however he felt, did not wish to oppose the girl then. He added: "From the point of view of religion there's no serious objection."

"Of course he's the son of an emergency man, Father, and I wonder if in honor I can marry him?"

"Do you wish my answer?" asked Father John.

"'Tis for that I came, Father. I want to know if I can honorably, as an Irish girl, marry John Lynch?"

"I fear not," answered Father John, as if he were pronouncing a doom.

"Thank you, Father. Then I'll break off the engagement."

So John Lynch and Mary Clancy were not married on the last Tuesday but one before Lent, nor ever after. Because of Mary's great loyalty in sacrificing love to

the traditions of her race, she became the most admired girl in all the town.

And that is why Mary received such rare greeting the night of Father John's concert. You should have heard her play! She awoke all the dreamy melodies of Ireland, those great things that contain the sighs and the tears and the laughter of our race from the beginning until now.

"Wisha God bless her!" prayed Mrs. Donovan in approval as Mary's bow glided back and forth over the strings with a velvet touch.

Next, Jim Hayes danced a reel with such dash that there were cries of "Bravo!" "Great!" "Treble it man!" Nora Cotter sang "She Is Far from the Land" without distinction of any kind and Dr. Moylan recited the "Hussars," a selection which few understood owing to the sprinkling of strange words.

At the close of the program, before the people had time to leave, Father John stood on the floor below the stage. We all knew he had something to say and waited.

"The program is finished and, all said, it satisfies me. It will satisfy you, too, if you understand its purpose. As a race we have the greatest heritage of song that has ever come out of the ages, but we do very little to preserve that heritage. You sing—not knowing, perhaps, but still you sing—the absurdities of London playhouses and leave unrecorded the lovely melodies of our nation. We borrow baubles from the pawnshops of strangers while our own chests are bursting with gold." "We sing"—and here Father John lifted his right hand as he always did when the feeling caught him—"We sing to the piping of a tin whistle, while the

harp and the zither are in the dust at our feet. We come of bards, but we have lost the glories of bardic tradition. Our fathers have sung to the ages and our tongues are as voiceless as clay."

And so he went on and on kindling with the fire of his own soul the souls of his people till they too were ablaze. When we left the hall that night there was not one who would not profess himself ready to sell half his holding for the glory of Irish music.

On the way home Dick Fitz said to the boys: "By gor, I'm going to get the ould flute out o' the loft an' try a few bars."

"Yeh, but sure you must get some one to taech you," suggested Johnny Mangan.

"I believe I'll learn 'Garryown' on the harp," interrupted Jack Hogan.

"I'll jine the choir," said Mick Sheahan.

"Well, I'll get a melodyean, at laest," was Tom Ahern's comment.

"Ye can all say what ye like an' play what ye like," concluded Mike's Mikeen, "but I'm thinkin' I'll never be happy now till I get a zither. You understand me—a zither."

XVIII

THE BARD OF ARDAGH.

ARDAGH was eight Irish miles from our town and boasted of a bard. Otherwise Creelabeg was superior in every corner of competition. Jim Ahern was Ardagh's bard and sang of Ardagh's glories. The glories were not crowded as thick as stars of a July night, to be sure. But a poet must sing. So when uneventful months went their leisurely way Jim Ahern created glories and clothed them in rimes and meters.

Father Moylan was the curate of Ardagh: land leaguer, orator, and people's man. Father John was a classmate of his in college days and they had read theology together in Maynooth. Although many of their young visions had gone out of the sky, although their suns had paled a thousand times under the clouds of the later day they had not forgotten all the fresh-blown splendors of the morning.

In late July Father John was spending a day with his friend Father Moylan. It was a pleasant visit among old books, old pictures, and dear memories now passing out into the twilight. In the mid-afternoon our priest took a leisurely walk over a quiet road beside which hay fields stretched to a blue horizon. He met Jim Ahern, the bard of Ardagh, fixing a gap in the ditch through which the hay had been carted some weeks before. For you must keep in mind, though Jim cavorted above the clouds, vaulting over comets in his far flights, he made his living among the fields where the odor of saved hay comes laden with dreams the summer long.

"How runs the muse these days?" asks the priest. Jim has not made a course in mythology.

"O faith, well enough, Father John, considerin' everythin'."

"'Tis fortunate you are, Jim, to be able to mount your Pegasus, and gallop off leaving trouble and care behind you."

"Wisha, thin, in a way 'tis true, though at times I do be thinkin' different."

"How can you feel otherwise than happy, living on your Parnasus with the select great forever?"

"By gor, Father John, I'll agree with you. An' 'tisn't for me to contradict the priest whatever my own idaes may be." Then Jim left an unfamiliar earth for an earth he knew.

"May be, Father John, you'd like to hear the *ballet* I lately composed about Father Moylan?"

"I'll be glad to hear anything that glorifies my friend," the priest answered with more enthusiasm than the proposal seemed to call for.

Jim took from the inside pocket of his waist-coat a manuscript that might have come from the time of the Tuatha De Dananns. There were seventeen stanzas to the piece, which Jim, after a preliminary clearing of his throat, began to read. He ended every line with a rising inflection, and paused at the conclusion of every stanza as if it were a new triumph.

"'Twas a cold December morning
In the year of eighty-eight,
When the peelers from Knockderrig
Marched to Thomas Nolan's gate.
They marched with guns and bayonets
Altogether four by four

Led by a villain sergeant
To Thomas Nolan's door.
"They came to Thomas Nolan
A man both poor and old.
He could not pay the rent that year
For Thomas had no gold.
His wife, she was distracted,
Her heart, it was full sore
When the peelers marched upon her
To Thomas Nolan's door.
"Said the sergeant to the bailiff,
'Now step up to the wall;
And the bailiff he obeyed him
And to Nolan he did call,
'Now go from out these premises
And come back here no more,
By the law you are evicted
From Thomas Nolan's door.'
"Then up stepped Father Moylan,
A priest both brave and true"—
"And, Jim, I hope you'll tell me
What did this good priest do?"
—came Father John's riming interruption.
"I'm comin' to it, I'm comin' to it immediately,"
Jim assured.

Then he resumed—

"And spoke unto the sergeant
In words both strong and few,
'O shame that you should do this deed,
It makes my heart right sore,
To see you send this family
From Thomas Nolan's door.'"

Father John interrupted in plain prose this time. "Never mind the rest, Jim. Tell me briefly what happened."

"So you won't hear any more of my *ballet*?" asked Jim, his feelings unmistakably hurt.

"No," insisted the priest. "The substance, *the multum in parvo*, will do."

"Maenin' by that, a-long-story-short?" asked Jim.

"Ay."

"Well,"—and Jim was sorely disappointed,—"Father Moylan talked with them an' by the power of his eloquence induced sergeant an' peelers to go back to their barracks an' laeve the Nolans where they were."

"When did all this happen?"

"O 'twas in the days whin great laeders stood up for the people," answered Jim vaguely.

"Well, did Nolan retain his house and land?"

"Deed he did. Sure the peelers never came back, they were that afeered o' Father Moylan."

"But I never read of this in the papers."

"Father John," answered Jim, "there be many things happens that don't be in the papers."

"Yes, and there be many things in the papers that don't happen," rejoined Father John sententiously.

"Ay, an' that's the truth, your Reverence. An' now if you'll listen again, you can hear all about it in my *ballet*."

"Not now,—not today," said the priest emphatically.

"Well, thin, Father John, you're missin' the best of it. The part near the ind is the best."

"It will keep—all good things keep, Jim. And wasn't Father Moylan arrested?"

"Arrested! They couldn't do it. The people would rise, sure my *ballet* says that—

"The peelers would arrest him,
That man both good and true,
But the people stood around him
And kept him from their view."

"The people—"

"Don't read any more, Jim," broke in Father John.

"Were there many people present when this happened?"

"Thousands."

"Indeed!"

"Sure it says so—

"The people stood by thousands
Around the holy man."

"I'll take your word for it, Jim. 'Tis coming toward noon and I must be getting on."

"Ah, I see your reverence is in a hurry an' won't stay to hear all the *ballet*."

"Not today."

In the afternoon, shortly before he left for his train, Father John said:

"Moylan, you've become a very considerable figure in this section. Jim has made you immortal in his latest uprising."

"Has he? Poor Jim!" Father Moylan answered sympathetically.

"This affair of the eviction has made you a sort of hero. How did you manage it?"

"Manage what?"

"O you know well enough; rebuking the sheriff and holding the police at bay."

"Sheriff? Police? Man, what wild talk is this?"

"No wild talk at all. Your Jim, the bard, sang all about it—the eviction and your great defy that kept the peelers from Thomas Nolan's door."

"When did you hear all this?"

"This morning under the sun while Jim fixed a gap in the road ditch."

"Well! well! well!" There was a long pause, then Father Moylan said:

"There never was such a thing. There hasn't been an eviction in this locality since I came here. And you may be sure I've never had the distinction of having an encounter with the police."

"Jim's imagination?"

"Jim's nonsense."

"Nevertheless," said Father John, "his muse ran to the full length of seventeen stanzas."

"And you stood there under the sun to listen to that rigmarole?"

"I did not, but I might have, for all you cared."

"Who loveth danger shall perish in it," quoted Father Moylan.

"But how was I to know I would meet this song-maker during my walk?" asked Father John.

"Well, next time you'll know better. Stay here with me and be sociable."

Two months later the postboy brought Father John a rather bulky package. It contained Jim's *ballet* and this note:

"Your Reverence: I thought may be I wouldn't see you again for some time and so I'm sending you the *ballet* which I hope you will read. When your reverence has finished reading it you may keep it as I have another copy by me."

"JIM."

XIX

“GREEN GROWS THE RUSHES, O!”

ALLEN O’DAY had a vegetable garden at the side of Progue’s Point where the sun came when the day was young. A white-thorn hedge grew around the garden that looked like a well groomed man, trimmed and all as it was by the diligent Mallen. Apple, cherry and peach trees had a big corner where they ministered to one or other of the senses almost every season of the year, and away to the south goose-berry and currant bushes bent their arched branches till they touched the ground. Early potatoes, turnips, carrots, white cabbage and many other choice vegetables had little plots of their own set off from the rest of the growing world. So sacred these plots looked you would no more think of stepping on them with unsanctified feet than you would on the velvet carpet of the sanctuary.

As you know, many a man who has a garden where sweet and precious things grow, has a heart that nourishes only thorns. What I mean is this: there are people who have a talent for adding a loveliness to the earth who are very unlovely themselves. Many a sweet song is sung by a sour poet. You will hear musicians calling rhapsodies out of their dream world who can be as pettish as spoiled children. The indulgent, adoring world calls all such bad manners the oddities of genius; conceit would be nearer the truth.

Now Mallen O’Day was the artist of growing things. He painted his picture of green and yellow and white and gold and purple and red and framed it with a hedge.

But, for all his skill as a gardener, his ways were kind and his heart patient; and for all the care he expended on what he grew, he was generous in parting with it. He gave potatoes to a beggar woman or a measure of gooseberries to a child as if he were receiving not bestowing; and when Mary Cronan had typhoid many is the time he sent her a vase of roses with the dew of the night not yet gone out of them. He kept on the sunny side of the ditch all through life and never let a smallness or a bitterness cast a shadow thereon.

He had a stave of a song which came as an end to everything he said, like the "Glory be" at the end of a decade. When he worked he hummed it, when he drove his donkey and cart to Banagee with his vegetables he whistled it, and when you tried to tell him anything mean or unlovely he threw back his head and sang it to the heavens. It was not much of a song, as songs go; the fact is, we might consider it a philosophy, a cheerful point of view, an outlook on life, rather than a song. When one dry summer the garden was brown and parched, Mallen stood at the green gate and sighed. The next instant he sang softly:

"Green grows the rushes O,
So does the bushes O,
Green grows the rush-es O."

On his way to the market of a Tuesday morning he met Jimeen Donovan back near Barnah bridge where the Deel is deep and solemn. It was raining, even as it had been for three days before.

"By gor, there's ne'er a fine day now at all, however 'tis," said Jimeen.

"There's as good fish in the say, Jimeen, as ever was caught. They're comin' man, they're comin'."

“Yes, but we’ll be under the ground whin they get here.”

“An’ if we do itself, ’tis aequal. Under the ground we rest more aisy then over.” Then to the little, black donkey, “Get up, Jack, get up!”

“Green grows the rushes O,
So does the bushes O,
Green grows the rush-es O.”

At the market he met Larry Condon. Said Larry:

“They tell me Mick Hayes has broken the pledge again.”

“What pledge?”

“Yeh, don’t you know? The pledge the ‘Holy Father’ gave him at the mission.”

“An’ how did he break it?” asked Mallen.

“An’ how did he break it!” echoed Larry. “Yeh, how indeed, but by takin’ a sup whin he promised he wouldn’t. An’ ’tis a shame he did it, an’ he after promisin’ the ‘Holy Father’ he wouldn’t touch or taste ale, porther, wine or strong liquors any more.”

“Wisha, faith, ’tis hard whin a man has a thirst.”

“That’s a poor how-d’ye-do, by gor, an’ he with a wife and small childer.”

“Larry, every man has a waekness; an’ if ’tisn’t one thing, ’tis another.”

“That’s all very good, but Mick Hayes should keep away from the fairs, ’cept when he’s got a business, an’ thin he should go home early.”

“Maybe he’s tryin’ hard, Larry. Let’s be aisy on him.”

"Ah, he's a waek sop, an' I can't be aisy on him."
"Thin I hope God will,"—

"Green grows the rushes O,
So does the bushes O,
Green grows the rush-es O."

'Tis many the summer afternoon Father John walked in among the roses and watched Mallen where he crept on one knee below the tall stalks weeding his "Flounders." Once, on Pathern Day, July twenty-fifth, he came in the morning. There was the bluest sky that ever the dear God unfurled over Ireland, and the gold of the sun softened the green of the trees; there was not the single whisper of wind, and the wide oak leaves lay still on the air like drowsy fish when their heads are set up stream.

"The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration,"

said Father John, who was always quoting poetry.

Mallen came from under the potato stalks and lifted his hat in salutation.

"Mallen," exclaimed Father John, with a grand gesture, "God never made this day for work; the land is full of dreams!"

"Ay, Father John; ay, indeed. I've often thought so myself on days like this, though I haven't the words to say it like you."

"I never hear a bee buzzing about a rose, or the white feet of a child half-hidden under the yellow sand, but I grow lonesome."

"An' why, Father John?" asked Mallen, his grey eyes wide for wonder.

“Because it makes me think of the young morning when all my day was ahead of me.”

“Faith, there’s a good bit ahead o’ you yet, Father John, plase God!”

“Yes, Mallen,” answered the priest with that sad tone his voice sometimes took, “but when we get beyond the noon hour the shadows lengthen and we begin to think of night and sleep.”

“Yeh, mornin’ or evenin’, ‘tis aequal, Father John,—

“Green grows the rushes O,
So does the bushes O,
Green grows the rush-es O.”

The priest smiled for a moment. Then he gave interpretation and enlargement to Mallen’s verses.

“Quite so, quite so. In joy or pain, youth or age, the rushes grow and wave in the wind’s breath. The lilies have a glory, and the song birds worry not about setting or sowing. Why so much planning and scheming, so much looking fore and aft when a wise God is directing all? ‘Quid prodest?’ The rushes grow, life progresses, not through us but through Him. We can not add a cubit to our stature wish we it ever so ardently. ‘Quid prodest?’”

“I don’t understand you entirely, Father John,” Mallen observed when the priest had ceased.

“Mallen, it doesn’t matter much anyhow. Your gooseberries are nearly ripe, I see.”

“Ay. Three days of sun will bring thim.”

“Then you’ll sell.”

“Some, Father John, some. Others I give away to a friend here, an’ a neighbor there.”

"Mallen," said the priest looking at the old gardener with sympathy, "'tis good to be generous with our store. Often when we get much, we are misers in giving."

"Father John, there'll be gooseberries growin' when I'm gone, an' strawberries an' currants an' apples an' plums."

"Ay, Mallen, or in other words"—and Father John sang in the style of Mallen—

"Green grows the rushes O,
So does the bushes O,
Green grows the rush-es O."

"That's 'bout the iday, Father John," Mallen agreed quietly.

* * * *

A warm summer day, four years later, a funeral procession wound its solemn way over the hill road to Knockderrig churchyard. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the coffin was placed in the grave. Father John had finished the prayers at the foot of the upturned brown earth and the people began to move slowly away.

"They're all goin'," said Johnny Mangan to Mick Danahar. They were standing outside the churchyard gate.

"Yerra, they are, Johnny," agreed Mick dolefully. "An' Mallen wasn't an old man aither. Sixty-four, maybe."

"Well, he won't thrim his garden any more, an' the flowers will miss him."

"They will, they will," said Mick; "but I'm thinking he'll have a garden up in Heaven with roses and marigolds an' a white-thorn hedge around thim."

“Ay, an’ he’ll give him around to the angels like he used to give him to the sufferin’ an’ the sick here.”

“An’ I spose’,” added Mick, “he’ll jine in with them when they sing.”

“No, Mick, he won’t jine with them; ‘tis they will jine with him. ’Twill be,

“ ‘Green grows the rushes O,
So does the bushes O,
Green grows the rush-es O.’ ”

XX

MISER'S HEAP.

HALF-WAY between our townland and Creelabeg schoolhouse, if you go across the country, there is a great pile of stones called "Miser's Heap," in the middle of a sloping field. It resembles a lesser pyramid in its solemn ancientness, and sets one to dreaming how it grew there. A water dyke runs down from the heap to a ravine at the end of the slope.

Many a summer morning have large-eyed school children 'stood' in the shadow of the great pile surmising that some giant must have collected all the large stones for the purpose of throwing them at his enemy. But for some reason the enemy had not appeared and the great heap of stones remained. That, of course, was before Tade Clancy gave us the true story of Miser's Heap the night of the bonfire. You must hear it.

In mid-June of the late eighties, the Nationalists won a notable parliamentary victory. All over the country it was decided to celebrate the event with fitting ceremonies. Seven or eight of our townlands agreed to have a bonfire on a grand scale on the top of Miser's Heap.

Promptly after school, the children of our section scurried in all directions to get fuel for the great blaze. One remembers the time quite distinctly across the long years. A blur of haze climbed up Ballyadan or hung still in the hollow places the quiet afternoon. Here and there sheep plucked the short grass or lay in uncon-

cerned leisure chewing the cud. Noises came to one distinctly—the bark of a dog, the whistle of a distant train, the laugh of a child or the call of a woman.

Through the haze appeared the children from every direction bearing dead tree limbs, dry bushes and odd pieces of timber to serve as fuel for the fire. They looked as if they might be fairies coming together for festival.

The night had well fallen when the last tree branch had been placed on the peak of Miser's Heap, and already scores of neighbors stood around the base of the pile. Someone put a match to the fuel and very shortly tongues of fire were leaping toward the sky while red sparks floated across the hazy night.

"'Tis a great heap an' a great fire, boys," mused Tade Clancy, looking up at the sparks that shone and vanished.

"Yeh, Tade, an' isn't it strange to have this pile o' stones standin' out here in the middle o' the field. My grandfather used to say that his grandfather remimbers his grandfather talkin' about it." So declared Mike Hartigan.

"Ay, an' many a grandfather's grandfather before him," Tade Clancy assured.

"I'm wonderin' how it came here at all?" queried Jim Donnelly.

"'Tis a strange way, thin, Jim; very strange entirely."

There was a silence of some minutes till Jim Donnelly said again:

"Yeh, Tade, an' if you know what 'tis, why don't you tell, an' not be goin' on griggin' us."

"Yerra, who's griggin' you, I'd like to know?"

"Well, thin, tell us an' don't be goin' on," Jim insisted.

"Faith, 'tis a short story enough, as stories go; an' if we sit down here on the soft grass under the blaze, I'll tell ye as I remember it."

When the neighbors were all seated, Tade began:

"There used to be the walls of an old house back there at the west side o' this field many years before the most o' ye were born. When I was a gorsoon, they pulled it down an' used the stones to make a wall around the new grave-yard at the other side o' Ballyadan. In that ould house there used to live, not in my day nor in your day, nor in the day of any man livin', an ould man,—Pogue Moga by name,—who owned most o' the land around here. He had flocks o' sheep an' herds o' cows roamin' about the fields, an' money flowed into him as fast as wather comes down Ballyadan in seven streams durin' early Spring. An' by this same token he was so close with it that a pinny had as much chance o' gettin' away from him as a man has o' gettin' out o' Spike Island.

"An' he had a daughter"—

"Yeh, they always do," interrupted Mike Ahern.

"Who do?" asked Tade, his teeth coming together like pincers.

"Yerra, all o' thim kind o' people that do be in stories."

"Well," answered Tade solemnly, "an' isn't it aequal to you whether they do or no, only hould your tongue an' let a man go on."

"Yeh, go on," protested the seemingly inoffensive Mike, "an' sure I'm not puttin' a sougawn across your path."

"The name o' this daughter was Cumah, an' she had tresses like sun-beams, an' cheeks like bog lilies, an' eyes as black as two ripe sloes. An' her face shone out o' her hood like a diamond out of a silk settin'."

"By gor, she must have been great entirely," whispered Jim Donnelly across to Mike Madigan.

"The Miser was rich beyond the draems of any livin' man, but the great trouble of his life was to find a safe place in which to hide his money. An' as for his lovely daughter, she was like a caged bird, never goin' any place with the neighbors—to ne'er a dance, faest or pattern. Indeed he kep' as close a watch over his girl as he did over his money.

"But where there's a will, there's a way, as they say. Anyhow, a boy,—Dermot Higgins by name,—lived near the house o' Pogue Moga an' his beautiful daughter. He was a likely lad an' very industrious, workin' his bit o' land with a happy heart an' a ready hand. Many's the time he saw the lovely cauleen walkin' in her garden listenin' to the song of a stray bird or pluckin' flowers that grew here an' there. One day Dermot met her at the gap laedin' into the garden, an' she smiled on him, an' her smile lifted up his heart. A second time whin they met he saluted an' she answered, an' as he wint away it seemed as if he could fly if he threw himself into the air. Well, for what's the use baetin' around the cover whin you know where the fox is—they met by stealth many times after that, an' so fell in love with each other. Thin they were married unbeknownst an' stole away from kith an' kin an' were never heard of afterward, although I know they must have lived very happy together.

"I needn't tell ye the burnin' anger an' storm an' rage o' Pogue Moga whin he found his beautiful daughter Cumah, that he loved most in all the world after his money, was gone away from him forever an' ever—as we say at the end o' the prayers. He tore his hair an' stamped his feet an' almost fell into a faint thin an' there."

"But I'll ingage he didn't faint," broke in Paudtheen's Paddy, the half wit.

"Yeh, an' why not, Paddy?" asked Mike Condon out of condescension.

"Because,"—and Paudtheen's Paddy grinned to twice his foolishness—"because they'd stael his money while he'd be faintin'."

"There's truth in your foolishness, Paddy," said Tade, magnanimously. "An' so he didn't faint, although he almost fainted, as I said. An' in his anger he cried: 'Dermot Higgins, you black thief, you've stolen my daughter with her will an' consint. Well, take her an' keep her for I never want to see her face any more. An' as for my money, naether she nor you, nor both o' ye will ever get a pinny of it. For I'll put it where no man will get it to the ind o' the world.'

"So at twelve o'clock that night, whin every man, woman an' child was asleep, he came out here an' dug up a big hole, put his money into it, covered it up again an' put the sods o' grass back as naet an' natural as before, an' thin he told his workmin that he wanted a big heap o' stones brought together over the place where he buried his money, sayin' he was goin' to build a house there. An' so at his biddin' they raised up this great pile which ye see.

"Thin whin 'twas finished Pogue Moga raised his right hand to the sky. 'Dermot Higgins,' says he, 'an' you, Cumah, my daughter, ye will never come back to my house, nor to my land, naether will ye inherit my land or live in my house. An' ye won't spind a pound, a crown or a pinny o' my money. For my land is my land an' my house mine, an' my money is hidin' safe an' secure for all time an' forever. Amin.'

"An' after three years an' three months an' three days, he tould his workmin to take away some o' the stones from the side o' the heap one dark night at twelve o'clock. Thin whin they had done so he sint thim away for the distance o' one mile, one furlong an' one foot. Thin he tould thim to start back to him again after three hours, three minutes an' three seconds from the time they left him.

"That was well an' good, but whin the workmin came back at the time appointed they saw ne'er a sign o' Pogue Moga, the Miser. They stood outside the hole they had made in the side o' the heap, but no Pogue was about the place at all, at all. They called him, but ne'er an answer.

"Thin one o' thim said,

"'Sure an' if Pogue don't come to us we'll try an' find him.' But the other said, 'I'm afeered.' 'I'll laed,' says the first one, 'an' d' ye follow me.'

"So gettin' a candle they entered the openin' at the side o' the heap; an' they didn't go far when they saw a hole in the ground an' big baems o' wood above it holdin' up the pile o' stones. Thin they saw a tunnel runnin' under the field to the ravine over there where it came out to the open in such a way you wouldn't suspect there was a tunnel there at all, at all. At the bottom

o' the hole was Pogue Moga dead an' cowld as the stones
o' the heap."

"An' I suppose he was lyin' over his money," suggested Jim Donnelly.

"He wasn't thin, Jim, he wasn't," answered Tade acidly. "An' why, because I'll tell you. 'Twas because the money was stolen through the tunnel, the remains o' which is, as ye can see, the dyke."

So it appeared. The dyke went from the stone pile to the ravine at the end of the field. We had often wondered how it came to be there. That night it was partially filled with water from recent rains. Now it took on a new meaning and gave us a new interest, solemn and still as it looked under the light of the dying bonfire.

"Yerra, an' Tade, won't you tell us who stole the money?" asked Paudtheen's Paddy.

"I won't thin; for an' if I tould ye that, ye'd be askin' me how the thieves spint it. Yes, ye would, so ye would."

Tade told the story to Father John one day when the priest was going down the hill country.

"The dreams of a dreaming race!" was our dear priest's only comment at the end of the tale.

XXI.

THE LUCK OF MICKY MACK.

ALL the long morning the rain came in a gray slant from Sheehys' fox-cover down the high field to the white thorn hedge.

"I can't go today, I'm afraid," mused Micky Mack, as he looked across the fields and up at the sombre sky.

"Wisha, you can wait a day an' not mind it," commented his thrifty wife as she anchored a pan of bread safely over the fire.

"But I promised Tim Donovan I'd meet him, an' I never like to disappoint a man."

"Promises are made to be broken," said Mrs. Mack, sententiously. "An' besides, whin you can't, you can't, an' that's all there's about it."

Yet the more Micky reflected, the more dissatisfied he became. "After all," he thought, "I promised Tim I'd meet him at Madigans', an' if he's there an' don't find me, just for a sprinklin' o' rain, he'll think 'tis quare."

Tim Donovan was a horse-dealer up near Ballingarry, who began a pony trade with Micky some months before at the fair of Creelabeg. The deal was not completed and the two men continued negotiations whenever and wherever they met afterwards. The matter remained, as Father John would say, *in statu quo* until Donovan proposed that Micky meet him in Madigans' the day after All Souls'.

At two o'clock, just as Micky had made up his mind to face the weather, the rain came down in great sheets.

He called to his wife from where he leaned on the half-door,

“Mary, maybe I’d better not go after all.”

“Yeh, of course. Since the day is what it is, an’ since you can’t work out in the garden, sure you might fix the cow-house where the rain’s comin’ in below the wall.”

“By gor, woman, I believe you’re right, an’ ‘tis what I’ll do.”

In less time than it takes to tell it, he was under the wall of the cow-house where previous rains had washed out a great gap below the mortar and stones. He worked for an hour shovelling up the earth to make way for the foundation. At three o’clock the skies cleared somewhat and the downpour became a drizzle. Perhaps Micky felt regret at disappointing his friend; perhaps he wanted a few hours of rest after the late Autumn work of the potato picking; perhaps he was not in the mood for wall fixing. Anyhow, he threw down his tools, climbed out of the pit and walked to the house.

“I’m goin’,” he announced to his wife.

“Wisha, why don’t you finish what you began like any sensible man would do.”

“No, I’m goin’ an’ that’s all about it.”

“All right, go if you want to, but don’t say I didn’t tell you.”

Half an hour later Micky Mack made his way through the high field. The rain drops hung heavy on the long spears of grass that drooped over the path and wet Micky’s shoes and trousers’ legs. He was very uncomfortable and half wished he had kept on with his work. To add to his annoyance, the rain began again. He reached the main road from Athery to Creelabeg and walked briskly enough to the south. He stepped into

Hannon's forge to get a little light and warmth from the blazing fire.

“By gor, 'tis a bad day to be out, Micky,” came the greeting from Jack Hannon, while he rounded a hot bar of iron into horseshoe shape.

“'Tis; but whin a man has to be out, he has to.”

“Wisha, thin,” interposed Tom Danahar, the journeyman, “'tis a big business entirely would keep me out of a day like this.”

“But my business is big business,” retorted Micky.

“Yeh, Micky, what big business can you have I'd like to know, to keep you out in the teemin' rain?” Danahar's irony cut Micky like a knife.

“Faix, 'tis your death o' cowld you'll be gettin', you an' your big business!” Hannon cautioned him.

“Faith, 'tis so indeed, an' maybe stretched out you'll be stiff and still an' all of us wakin' you,” added his journeyman.

“The devil mind ye!—God forgive me!—ye two comforters of Job,” snapped Micky as he left the forge.

The rain, wind driven, now poured down till the bubbles fairly danced on the hollow places where the water had collected.

“Maybe 'twould be better an' if I'd turn back,” mused the farmer. Then he remembered the irony of the blacksmith and his journeyman.

“Devil a foot!” he muttered, as with head bent low he made his way anew against rain and wind.

Up at Grageen, Mage Higgins—Jimeen Higgin's wife—called out from behind her half-door:

“Yerra, Micky, an' is it out o' your mind you're gettin', to be walkin' in the weather a day like this.”

"Mage, 'tis a long tongue you have, an' if you'd keep it between your teeth 'tis less harm 'twould do, so 'tis."

"Wisha, Micky, you poor anashore of a craether, an' why don't you come in out o' the rain? An' what kind of a wife have you at all to let you out?"

Micky was already on his way and did not hear to the full the delicate blending of pity and irony. At Meehan's corner, where Newbridge dyke runs under a small bridge of a single span through marsh lands to the river Deel, Micky met Dick Noonan, the postboy, on his way to Athery.

"Yeh, Micky, 'tis fond of the rain you are to be out under it."

"An' what about you, Dick?"

"O faith, 'tis I that must be out rain or shine; otherwise 'tis sittin' on the hob by the fire I'd be, havin' a smoke for myself."

"Every man for himself an' God for us all," answered Micky briskly.

"Indeed thin, you need Him, Micky, an' you out by yourself a day like today."

He met the Ardee station master hurrying down Pound Lane just as he was entering the town.

"Micky, you must be fond of the fresh air to be fighting the weather."

"A man must be out sometimes," murmured Micky.

"Sickness in the family, and after a doctor, I suppose?"

"No thin."

"Some great reason must be in your head anyhow, to be out."

"Every man has a *raison de faire* of his own."

"Ay, and a mind of his own, too, Micky—whatever kind of a mind it may be."

As Micky walked down the street it seemed as if all life had gone out of the town. There were no donkeys in the courthouse square, no women, their heads covered with plaid shawls, entering or leaving the shops, no ballad singers, singing the glories of some fallen Whiteboy! All about was rain, mud and flowing gutters; and above—sombre, low clouds. Shopkeepers in snug leisure behind their windows looked out pitiably at Micky's bent body making headway against the wind.

"The anashore of a man," they seemed to say, "an' why don't he stay at home by his fire?"

Micky saw their pity—that helped to make him feel he was a half-witted poor creature who needed someone to take care of him.

"An' if I have come so far," he muttered in pride of resolution, "I'll go every foot of it now to spite them."

Five minutes later he was in Madigans' bakery and flour shop. The odor of baking bread came to his senses pleasantly.

"Step back from the sacks, Micky my man, an' don't drown the flour," said John Madigan by way of greeting.

"I can go out an' wait in the street for fear I might burn the house," snapped Micky.

"'Tis more like you could put out a blaze, Micky," Madigan replied, laughing at his own gift of repartee, in which he was joined by his wife and two daughters.

"Is Tim Donovan here with ye?" asked the farmer.

"What would he be doin' here in weather like we're havin'?"

"If he's here ye might as well say so an' quit sparrin'."

"Well, he isn't thin, nor is he likely to be," Madigan answered.

"By gor, he said he'd be here at four o'clock, an 'tis well beyant five now."

"But what man would keep his word in a teemin' rain?" asked Mrs. Madigan looking at Micky.

"But an' didn't I?"

"Yeh, that's so, indeed." Then John Madigan finished his thought in a confidential whisper. "But sure they say, Micky, that you be a little quare like."

"Wisha the devil mind you!—an' what d' you mane?"

"'Tis aequal, Micky, 'tis aequal. But at any rate 'tis a bad day to be out an' a good day to be in." Donovan laughed softly at Micky's ire.

"An' for all I declare to you, John Madigan," Micky proclaimed, "that a man's word is a man's word."

"'Tis thin," answered Madigan; "but for all that a man's word won't keep your back warm an' your shins dry."

It was half-past six when Micky left the bakery. Tim Donovan had broken his plighted word and Micky had lost faith in the stability of human things. He was damp and chill; the dark had already fallen and the beat of the rain was all along the road. Through the windows of roadside houses he could see people sitting amid heat and comfort. Down at Hartigan's, a mile out from the town, he caught the odor of frying bacon that quickened his appetite. His wet clothes clung to his chill body and the water oozed through his shoe laces. At Cronans', Miss Kate played the piano below the oil lamp while her mother lifted a steaming tea-kettle from the blazing turf fire. By contrast the rain from Micky's hat poured down his neck and back. A side-car swept past, its occupants warm and

dry under their rugs and rain coats, and flung the white mud of the road on his wet clothes. At the forge the fire was out and the two black-smiths were gone home. Micky Mack was glad of that; he would escape their gibes. In twenty minutes more, from the edge of the fox-cover across the high field, the light of home. He has the picture of the greeting when he returns.

"Wisha, you poor anashore, you fool of a man, to spend your day in the rain an' come in here this night like an empty sack drawn out of the river!" Then the irony when he announces that Donovan didn't meet him after all, and the trip to Creelabeg was made in vain!

"Well," mused Micky as he trudged along, "'twill be all over in a hundred years—if I don't take the pneumoney an' die."

A few minutes later he walks through the yard to the front of the house. The kitchen door is open, and Micky follows a pathway of light.

"Thank God, 'tis you!"—ejaculates his wife.

"Manin' what?" asks Micky in awe.

—"An' not your coffin," the woman finishes.

"Yerra, what is it?" queries the bewildered man.

"'Tis everything, entirely," she answers vaguely.

"Glory be to God!"

"You may as well say so, an' several times."

"Well, 'tis meself anyhow an' not me coffin. An' I'm alive an' won't need the coffin unless I get the pneumoney. An' as for me goin', a man's word is his word no matter what you say."

"O thank God you wint, me poor man!"

"Yeh but," Micky ventured anxiously, "the devil a bit o' Tim came at all, at all."

“Yerra, don’t mind about Tim so long as you’re here an’ alive.”

“Well, an’ what is it you mane, woman?”

“What is it I mane? I’ll tell you what I mane if you come in out o’ the wet.”

“Well?” asked Micky shaking the rain off his hat.

Mrs. Mack leaned on the kitchen table for support as she declared: “Half an hour after you left me, an’ I thinkin’ I was married to a boudthaun, didn’t the side o’ the cowhouse fall into the pit where you were workin’: an’ if you weren’t on the high road to Creelabeg, ‘tis stiff an’ cowld you’d be lyin’ under the mortar an’ stones this day.”

“O faith, I said I’d go, an’ a man’s word is a man’s word,” declared Micky with spirit.

“Well, whether ‘tis or no, they aren’t wakin’ you this night anyhow.”

“An’ they won’t—if I don’t get the pneumoney.”

“Yeh, hurry back to the room an’ change,” commanded the solicitous wife.

“I will, I will. But—but you’re not married to a boudthaun as you were thinkin’,” Micky reminded her with severity.

“No; at least not for the present.”

XXII.

THE GHOST

IT was mid-December, the wind wailing out among the haggard trees. As the Condons had a warm fire and a big kitchen, the neighbors went there every night as to a congenial place to meet and mingle. An agreeable family they were, never showing resentment that their home was thus robbed of quiet and privacy. Jim Condon himself had that way of welcoming every man, woman or child, you felt the house was yours once you stood on the gravel floor.

The older men began to tell ghost stories that December night till the hush of the preternatural fell upon the house, and every voice sank to a whisper.

“Do’ ye remember Ned Hallinan at th’ other side o’ Progue’s Point?” Dan Sheahan asked as Mrs. Condon added a fresh sod to the fire. Yes, everybody remembered Ned. He died of typhoid fever five years before.

“Well, the night Ned was waked ’twas like the Egyptian darkness with ne’er a sign o’ moon or stars all over the sky. We had been smokin’ a bit an’ tellin’ a yarn now an’ thin out in the kitchen, an’ the women were in the room sayin’ the baeds. I was tired an’ sleepy myself, an’ besides the next day I had to drive to Clounana to buy a rick o’ turf to keep me in firin’ for the rest o’ the winter. So I left the kitchen ’bout ’leven o’clock, an’ on my way out I could look into the room where Ned was lyin’ so still an’ white upon the bed. An’ while I was lookin’ at him on my way out it seemed he beckoned to me with

his head, like as if he wanted me to go in an' spaek to him."—

"Glory be to God!" ejaculated Jack Dempsey.

"Faix, 'twas strange, so 'twas," observed Jack Hogan.

"An' did you go in, Dan?" asked Tim Clancy.

"Yeh no, thin; for I thought 'twas my feelin' an' not my seein', an' so I kept on my way. An' as I walked out across the yard an' down the boreen over the rush bog, all the time I was thinkin' o' Ned an' his thin hands an' his white face. I walked slow like, for the night was dark as I said; an' whin I was over at the other side o' the bog I heard a step on the boreen. My heart almost stood still for the fright of it but after a minute I took courage an' said to myself: 'Sure what's the use o' raisin' a hew an' cry an' hullabullu, for if 'tis nothin' 'tis nothin', an' if 'tis somethin', 'tis better pretend nothin' an' act like I didn't notice it at all.' "

"By gor, Dan, you did the best thing I'm thinkin', whatever 'tis," commended Jim Donnelly.

"I began to reason with myself," continued Dan, "that after all it might be nothin' but a stone slippin' down the side o' the hill. Because, as ye know, Father John is always tellin' us not to be superstitious. So I walked on makin' no remark yes, ay, or no of any kind. Sure I hadn't gone six feet whin I heard the steps behind me comin' again. Thin I looked back, the cowld sweat standin' on me forehead like dew on the clover. 'By gob' says I ' 'tis somethin'.' An' as luck would have it, so it was. For about forty yards back o' me—or may be fifty,—for fear o' tellin' a lie—I sees somethin' white through the pitch dark. 'Praise be to the Lord God!' says I to myself, 'may be 'tis Ned comin' after me, seein' as I did not go to him when he called me.' "

"By gor, Dan, 'tis a wonder you lived at all, man," Tim Clancy interrupted.

"I stood like I was froze to the ground, an' it—or he, or whoever 'twas—seemed to stand too. After a while I began to walk again, an' sure didn't it walk straight after me. 'Blessed be the Lord God this night!' said I under me breath. I fell into an aisy run somethin' like a throt, an' sure didn't it run too! I stopped again an' looked around by way o' no harm. The very same minute it stood still, not comin' a foot nearer.

"Thin, all afeered, I ran like the devil was at me heels down along the boreen by the edge o' the bog, an' sure I hadn't gone a yard whin it came after me like another devil was behind it."

"Ay," murmured Mick Ahern emitting a whiff of tobacco smoke, his eyes half-closed in mute contemplation.

"By gor, Dan 'twas terribly strange," said Tim Clancy from his place next the hob.

A dismal rain blew down from the Ballyadan hills that tapped vigorously on the windows and back-door; and around the northwest corner of the house came the high-pitched whistle of the wind. The ominous bark of the black-and-white shepherd dog arose high above all other noises of the night. "'Tis a wonder you're alive at all, Dan!" Jim Donnelly exclaimed in admiration.

"Yeh, by gor, 'tis strange to me you didn't fall down an' die right thin and there." Mike Noonan relighted his pipe after having repeated Jim's thought.

"Well, I lived somehow, though how I lived is more than I can say. But to make a long story short, whin I ran, it ran, an' whin I walked it walked, an' whin I stood it stood. An' by gor, it remained the same distance

behind me, not comin' or goin' a foot nearer or farther. An' always it kep' lookin' the same white figure shinin' out o' the darkness."

"Was it tall at all?" asked Tim Clancy in rime.

"I wouldn't say for sure, but I'm thinkin' 'twas six or seven feet may be."

"Did it spake e'er a word?" Mick Ahern looked solemnly at Dan while putting his question.

"Ne'er a single word."

"Did it look like Ned Hallinan, the man they were wakin'?" persisted Tim Clancy.

"Yerra, sure man, I couldn't see the face of it," answered Dan somewhat impatiently. "All I could make out was the figure in white. Whin I reached Bannons' Dike, where it runs into the bog, I stood still. 'Tis twenty feet across or may be more, as ye know. 'By gor,' says I to myself 'I'll lep it if I have to die for it this night.' Well, I walked back 'bout twinty feet, took a big breath, ran at it—an' leped it."

"You did!" exclaimed several. Dan answered defiantly: "I did; every foot of it, I did. An' thin I kep' on runnin' to the north thinkin' may be, I'd escape the sight of it. But sure didn't it take a run an' lep it—yes every foot of it. I thought the breath would go out o' my body, I was that waek and faeverish. I was now 'bout a quarter a mile from home, whin all at once, of a sudden like, it began to gain on me. 'Hould up your head, Dan, an' be a man an' don't die,' says I to myself as it kep' gainin' on me. My head was fallin' from side to side like an ear of oats in the wind of a wet day. Whin I was fifty feet from the gate laedin' into the yard I fell over an' fainted like I was dead."

"Glory be to God!" piously ejaculated Mrs. Condon.

"Yeh, just like I was dead, though o' course I wasn't."

"I'll ingage you weren't," Mike Ahern said ironically.

Dan ignored the interruption and continued: "I lay there for three minutes—or more may be, for fear o' tellin' a lie—whin I woke an' came back to myself. An' whin I did, there it was standin' about ten yards away. Thin I began to crawl on my hands an' feet for full fifty yards, an' it moved very slowly after me. I opened the gate very soft like an' slipped through. Thin I closed it an' looked back. I could see over the gate the white figure standin' still an' straight. I heard Mooney's dog, an' that gave me courage. So I up an' says, 'Yeh, Ned, is it anythin' you want? Sure an' if 'tis, spake to me and I'll get it!' Devil a word yes, ay or no I got at all, at all. So I said again: 'Yeh, Ned, an' why don't you answer?' Ne'er a word or a sign of any kind. I got bolder, bint down an' looked through the bars o' the gate. Thin I could see the figure comin' to me aisly like, swayin' from side to side. An', by gor, the breath nearly wint out o' me whin I saw there in front o' me Harrington's ould white horse, with ribs on him like rafters holdin' up a slate roof."

"So, 'twasn't Ned after all," Jim Donnelly commented in evident disappointment.

"No, Jim, much to my joy, 'twasn't."

"Wisha faith, Dan, 'tisn't much you have to do spindin' the night yarnin' about yourself an' Harrington's horse," Tim Clancy flung in by way of reproof.

"Tisn't thin," assented Mick Ahern.

"Anyhow, I had courage," protested Dan in defense.

"You had, 'specially afther closin' the gate between yourself and the oul' horse." Jack Hogan's sarcasm was unmistakable.

“ ‘Tis aequal, boys, ‘tis aequal. I found out the truth anyhow. An’ if I hadn’t ‘tis about the ghost o’ Ned Hallinan I’d be tellin’ ye this night.”

“So much the better, Dan. Since you wint from sweat to faever an’ from faever to trimblin’, an’ from trimblin’ to faintin’, you might just as well have seen Ned an’ be done with it,” Mick Ahern remarked.

“By gor, that’s right,” agreed John Dempsey, who seldom spoke. “ ‘Tis like you’d be all fixed to have your tooth pulled, an’ all at once they’d stop before they began.”

“Ay so, indeed,” agreed Jim Donnelly nodding thoughtfully. “ ‘Tis like you’d be goin’ to jump into the cowld water, an’ all at once you’d change your mind.”

“Well, thin, to plase ye,” retorted Dan somewhat testily, “next time I see Harrington’s horse I’ll say he’s a ghost.”

“Wisha faith you might as well, seein’ you had so much sweatin’ an’ runnin’ an’ faintin’ an’ goin’ on about it.” Mrs. Condon folded her knitting very carefully, thereby giving a quiet hint for the men to break up the mystic circle.

XXIII.

KATE.

KATE was Moll's sister; and Moll was married to Fergus O'Dea, the weaver of Newbridge. Kate was unmarried at forty and conducted a dressmaking shop up at Creelabeg, where Pound Lane crosses Church street. I should have told you in the first place that Kate's second name was Healy, only this has no importance whatever, since Kate's second name was never used except on envelopes coming through the post. She was a personage, like Victoria or Ann.

The important thought is that Kate was single at forty because she wished it; that she allowed at least seven ships sail out to the troublous sea of matrimony because she refused an invitation to go aboard.

"Tell me, Kate," said Father John, "is it so that you missed Johnny Delaney by a foot?"

Kate learned her trade in Dublin and came back with a Dublin accent which one never attempts to reproduce.

"What do you mean, Father John?" Kate was basting and stopped short as if taken with a stitch under her heart.

"I mean what I mean, no more, no less," the priest answered.

"Faix, you must be meaning in Latin, Father John, for I don't understand."

"Well, you know what a foot is," said the priest.

"I do, indeed. 'Tis a third of a yard."

"Quite so. And you missed Johnny Delaney by a third of a yard."

"And how, your reverence?"

"Well, if I must, Kate, I must. Johnny was going to marry you once upon a time. But just when the time came he changed his mind."

"Father John—and begging your pardon—but if the busybody who told you that would only turn around and tell you the right of it, you wouldn't need to spend time sparring to get me off my guard. But since you're so anxious, I'll tell you."

"I'm not anxious at all, Kate; I just made a remark."

"A remark, is it?" Kate tilted her head and held her arms akimbo. "'Tisn't a remark at all, Father John. 'Tis missing the mark, it is."

"O yes, joke about it now, so you'll forget to tell me."

"I'm not joking and I'm not going to forget to tell you either, Father John." And Kate began.

"When Johnny Delaney was going to ask me"—

"Was going—how do you know he was going?" interrupted Father John.

"'Tisn't like 'twas the second bell for the last Mass; and so if your reverence will wait, I'll tell you."

"Beg your pardon," exclaimed the priest humbly.

"Pardon granted," Kate answered grandly.

"When Johnny Delaney was going to ask me, I said to him, 'I really haven't thought about it;' 'Naether have I,' said he. 'And besides, Johnny,' I told him, 'I couldn't think of it just now.' 'All right, by gob,' he said. "'Tis six o' one and half a dozen o' the other.' With that he set sail for America."

"Broken hearted?" suggested Father John.

"No, heart broken," Kate answered.

"Always," concluded the priest, "on the assumption that the premises are correct."

"Indeed, 'tis well your reverence knows I always keep my premises correct."

In late July, Mike Madigan met Kate at the pattern of Newbridge.

"Miss Kate, they say Mikeen Ahern is askin' Jamsie Hallinan to make the match for him."

"They say—and who is they?"

"O Tom, Dick an' Harry an', an'—everybody."

"Well, tell Tom, Dick, Harry and everybody and yourself too, Jim, that Miss Kate wants no go-betweens. The man she chooses, she chooses and that settles it. And tell them, besides, that she'll keep on waiting as long as she likes, till the right man comes."

"He's a long time comin', by gor, like Timeen Donovan's donkey," murmured Mike.

"Well, when he comes, he'll be all the more welcome."

"If he ever does."

"Or if he never does."

"Well, anyhow," said Mike, leaning on the other foot, "some people are entirely too particular."

"Particular people can afford to be particular."

"O of course, that's right and proper enough so far as it goes."

"And besides, Mike, proper nouns shouldn't be treated like common nouns."

"I know; but all the same an' the common nouns like to be treated, too," Mike grinned.

"Mike, instead of a treat, 'tis the pledge you ought to be taking as I'll tell Father John when I see him."

"Yeh, don't do that, Kate, an' I'll take the pledge whin you get married."

"No, Mike; instead you take it till I find a man."

"O faith, no. That would be takin' it for life."

The next moment Mike was lost in the crowd.

Kate's shop at the crossing of Pound Lane and Church Street was tidy and prim, like Kate herself. A fireplace, always bright with the glow of a turf fire, made the work room cozy and inviting when the wind moaned insistently from the Ballydan hills.

Dear Father John called in there many a time to lift the pain out of his heart when a sense of lonesomeness oppressed him. For somehow, Kate kept the summer there when the rain beat mournfully on the hard flags of the side path, and her talk came as a fresh breath of the sea up the Deel from Athery.

It was late November when Father John laid away young Mrs. Ryan in the new earth of the graveyard back of Creelabeg Chapel. She left a young husband and seven children—the eldest a girl of sixteen. It was a typical South-Ireland November day. The wind sobbed fitfully through the bare limbs of the ancient oaks and dead ivy leaves fell to the ground where they nestled in the long grass below the high wall.

Father John stood above the grave and recited those great, ancient prayers of the Ritual. The wind gusts wailed the responses and the rain hysopped the yellow coffin.

After the funeral, the priest called to see Kate.

“You shouldn't be out in the wet, Father John,” she admonished, after the priest crossed the threshold.

“That's just my reason for coming in, Kate.”

“That's true, indeed, as a woman of my understanding should know.”

Then in a serious tone, “Twas sad about poor Mrs. Ryan, wasn't it, Father John?”

"'Twas, Kate—but she's better off. The children are the big question now."

"If there's anything I can do to help, Father John, let me know. I have no one depending on me and I'm very willing to lend a hand."

The priest felt relieved.

"Since you are so good, Kate, the thought comes to me that maybe you could take the eldest girl in with you to learn dressmaking, so she could help a little later on."

"Father John, let her come when she's ready. What you say is what I say."

Later on two younger sisters were also given places and Kate's shop became a sort of training school.

"By gor, Kate, you must be thrivin' with all the new girls you're gettin'," Jim Donnelly hinted one morning.

"We always find work for willing hands," Kate answered sharply.

"An' they're likeable girls," Jim whispered as he walked over to the table where the girls worked.

"How many are they, Kate?"

"Count them to occupy your mind."

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Faix, Kate, 'tis lots o' dresses you're makin'."

"O we do other work, Jim."

"Yeh, an' what, Kate?" asked Jim, his curiosity sharpened.

"Linings for coffins and shrouds for the dead."

"O murther! I'm goin'."

"Wait, Jim, and I'll take your measure for a lovely shroud."

"Let me out, woman, let me out!"

"'Twill fit you like the habit on the statue of St. Brigid."

"Are you takin' laeve o' your senses? Sure, I'm only thirty-one years an' three days."

"Yes, Jim, but we might be rushed the night you go."

"Let me out, woman, or 'tis dead you'll have me before I laeve."

"And besides, Jim, they're cheap now and I'll give you the benefit of the discount."

"Holy Mary, Mother o' God, deliver me from this woman!"

"And you'll know what you're getting; but when you're stiff and cold you won't know at all."

"Let me out, Kate; for the love o' the twelve Apostles, let me out! I believe you'd man-slaughter me for the sake o' sellin' me a shroud."

The nuns had a bazaar in the Spring of the year, and Paudtheen's Paddy called in to ask Kate to make him something for the raffle.

"Yes, I'll make something for you, Paddy dear."

"An' what, Miss Kate?" asked the youngster with wide eyes.

"A cap—a dunce's cap, Paddy. And there'll be two peaks to it, so they won't know which way you're looking."

"Be sure, an' Miss Kate, they'll be callin' me gommol worse than ever thin."

"Let them. And if you're the gommol they say you are, 'twill suit you; and if you aren't, it won't. And then you can give it to some other gommol—for there are plenty of them."

Mary Donovan from back near the mountains called to fit on a skirt which was still in the making.

"Mary," asked Kate pointing through the shop window to a large, lumbering man at the other side of the

street, "isn't that Simple Tom from back near your place?"

"No, Miss Kate," answered Mary with deference; "that's not the one; that's his brother."

"Simple Tom's brother?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Faith, by the looks of him he didn't escape very much from being Simple Tom also," mused Kate.

"An' why do they call him Simple Tom, Miss Kate?" asked Paudtheen's Paddy.

"Because he can read backwards, you gommol," she answered.

"By gor, I wouldn't ever have knowed it, Miss Kate, only for you."

Dick Fitz came in with a sack of potatoes all sweet with the smell of the country.

"They're large an' maely, Kate. Will you take them at six puntz a stone?"

"I won't."

"Will you take them at fi' puntz?"

"I will."

"By gor, Kate," said Dick reflectively, "I know now why you never married."

"An' why, Dick?"

"'Tis the will an' the won't o' you. An' with your goin' on you laeve a man like a calf at a cross roads not knowin' which way to go."

"'Tis well put, Dick, for a man of your small learning."

"Ah, thin faix, I may know more than you think, Miss Kate."

"Faith, maybe so, Dick. I suppose if you were close up so you could see, you could spell a capital H on the side of a sack."

"Spaekin' of sacks, Miss Kate, will I laeve it?" pointing to his sack of potatoes.

Kate nodded.

"Thank you. I hope the right man comes."

"At all events, the right man is going."

* * * *

Now all this comes to one this November day when the rain is blown across the vacant fields where awhile ago corn shocks stood like Indian wigwams. It is good to have gracious memories from the bright hours of the young day to sweeten the bitterness of the growing old; dreams of happy summers for winters when the dark gathers soon.

God bless all the neighbors! They come to me now laden with dear dreams. And God be good to Kate living or among the dead! If living, may age still find the mirth of youth in her heart. If among the dear dead, may she rest very peacefully under the brown earth of Creelabeg graveyard, where so many of the neighbors are already at rest.

XXIV.

THE LAST PAGE.

NO day goes by but the memory of him comes to me many, many times. His quiet manner, his unpretentious goodness, his patriotism, his vision and poetic imagining, return to me again and again from over seas and over years. The thought of him keeps greener than any other, just like the fairy ring in the middle of the field. His dreams were among the stars, but his affections were close to the daisies where the plain people walk.

Dear Father John! He was taken from us after ten years of gentle ministering and sent to Pallas where the Shannon widens on its journey to the West. Plentiful hayfields and ancient trees surround the quiet town. Down there, during the brief years after he left us, the dear priest must have often journeyed over an unfrequented road to where the river lay as flat as the meadows beside it. He must have watched thoughtfully the brooding waters as they moved stealthily to the awaiting sea.

Not far from the river—in Pallas chapel-yard—the grass grows green above him now. I have stood over the grave in the shadow of a protecting oak and thought of the lovely years that had been and that could not be now any more. Father John was away from us resting in holy earth; and many, many of the quiet people one remembers are no more in Creelabeg. God rest Father John! God rest all those dear loved ones wherever they lie! All that has been is no longer. The memory alone keeps.



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